

ETG 4: COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

TRANSVERSAL STRATEGIES

(DRAFT 5)

1. ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents the transversal work of the European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities (ETG 4) undertaken in 2003. The group assembled 32 Equal Development Partnerships (DPs), predominantly operating under the Themes of Reconciliation (G) and Desegregation (H) and chosen through a joint selection process by Member States and the ETG's Steering and Liaison Groups. Working together in meetings and through electronic communication, those DPs covered a large number of [themes and sub-themes](#) and - through contributing promising practices - created the "[Living Document](#)". It is structured in three main chapters focusing on Reconciliation of Working and Family Life, Horizontal Desegregation and Transversal Strategies. The latter are addressing the [transversal principles of EQUAL](#) in a gender equality perspective, but also a range of concepts that are common to both Theme G and Theme H DPs.

Gender equality alliances in territorial and sectoral contexts

- [Linking reconciliation and desegregation strategies](#)
- [Developing assessment, monitoring and benchmarking tools](#)
- [Linking gender equality and economic development](#)
 - [Involving the right partners and maintaining their commitment](#)
 - [Presenting business cases for equal opportunities](#)
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Empowerment

- [Empowering final beneficiaries](#)
- [Empowering DP partners](#)

Mainstreaming strategies

- [Maximising the mainstreaming potential within the DP](#)
- [Linking up with external key players](#)
- [Stimulating systemic change](#)

In 2004 ETG 4 will continue its work and focus a second set of themes and sub-themes, thus completing the collection of EQUAL good practices related to meeting the key challenges of Equal Opportunities policies in Europe. Another group of DPs is being selected as new members of the ETG.

In parallel, both Steering Group and Liaison Group will seek to capitalise on the links and synergies between ETG 4 achievements and current and emerging policy priorities at national and European level. ETG 4 outcomes will also be presented to and discussed with key players, particularly policy makers, to stimulate dissemination and mainstreaming of good practices resulting from EQUAL across the European Union. The new Member States will be pro-actively involved in this process .

2. EQUAL TRANSVERSAL PRINCIPLES

The specific architecture of EQUAL involving five transversal principles clearly supports the objective of the European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities (ETG 4): the development of a "**European Model of Comprehensive Approaches to Equal Opportunities in a territorial context**".

1. The **Partnership Approach** requires EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) to forge a coalition of committed and competent partners which cooperate to develop solutions to the multi-dimensional problems of discrimination and social exclusion. In the case of Pillar 4 DPs, but also of Transnational Partnerships (TPs) involving Equal Opportunities, this requirement often leads to linking organisations specialising in gender equality issues to key players that are in a position to mainstream relevant EQUAL achievements. In their work, the DPs often combine the two core challenges to achieving gender equality: reconciliation of working and family life and tackling gender gaps and desegregation on the labour market.
2. **Empowerment** strategies of Pillar 4 DPs targeted at both participating organisations and final beneficiaries are always related to gender equality. Empowerment is often defined as helping people or organisations to help themselves and to develop their full potential. For many Pillar 4 DPs that entails the creation of mechanisms to enable the active participation of both groupings in the design and decision-making of their projects, but also a special focus on the empowerment of final beneficiaries as individuals and as groups suffering from discrimination and social exclusion.
3. **Transnational Cooperation** of Pillar 4 DPs is yielding added value for project promoters and has the potential to transfer policy and practice related innovation from one Member State to another. The different track records of Member States concerning the most important aspects of equal opportunities – such as care for children and other dependants and gender gaps on the labour market – are stimulating cross-border cooperation and creating a competitive edge for governments and other key players at all levels.
4. **Innovation** in Pillar 4 of EQUAL lies often not in the specific approaches to Reconciliation and Desegregation per se, but in the interlinking synergies between the two themes and their potential to make gender equality a reality for women and men. Added value emerging from DPs and TPs is in many cases triggered by their partnership and territorial dimension, be it in the form of broad-based local coalitions or as specific equal opportunities contributions to local development. This is what ETG 4 is undertaking to "capture" and further develop in its European Model of Comprehensive Approaches to Equal Opportunities.

The ETG is looking at context-oriented innovation related to the development and/or improvement of methods and tools; goal-oriented innovations centred around the formulation of new objectives such as the creation of new occupational profiles with good labour market prospects; and context-oriented innovations, i.e. systemic approaches to social change.

5. **Mainstreaming** is ensured by the mix of DP partners, but also through the selected problems and challenges to be addressed. Those are in most cases closely related to national policy priorities and to the relevant Guidelines of the EES. The strategic involvement of relevant political decision-makers and public authorities opens promising perspectives to integrate EQUAL outcomes into regular provisions which are crucial to equal opportunities.

3. GENDER EQUALITY ALLIANCES IN TERRITORIAL AND SECTORAL CONTEXTS

A striking feature in the context of Pillar 4 is the large number of DPs and TPs 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 are being developed as **territorial or sectoral pacts** for work-life-balance. Also many **desegregation** projects have an involvement in such alliances. 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 to business creation support), they 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.

3.1. LINKING RECONCILIATION AND DESEGREGATION STRATEGIES

The persisting obstacles to equal treatment of women and men on the labour market form a kind of complex maze which – to be detangled – requires a multi-faceted strategy to tackle its interlinked stumbling blocks for both women and men. These strategies include systemic approaches targeted at dismantling discriminatory mechanisms in education, training and labour market systems, which are based on traditional gender roles and the male breadwinner model. At the same time they need to address deep-rooted perceptions of gender roles in private and working life as well as in the society in general.

But whatever the strategies entail in terms of awareness raising and active participation of all relevant players, they must be bound to link the two big challenges to reconciliation and desegregation. Without an improved articulation of women's life times and an overall provision of accessible, affordable quality care for children and other dependants, the endeavour of promoting a gender balance in all economic sectors and occupations and at all levels of corporate hierarchies will fail. A large number of EQUAL Pillar 4 DPs and TPs incorporate this dual approach and haven chosen to act locally or regionally to achieve their objectives.

An Irish DP, which is coordinated by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at Dublin's Trinity College, is a good example for that kind of synergy. It aims to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life, to support people who have difficulties to access or maintain employment and to encourage employers and policy makers to introduce models of flexible work organisation into their normal practices. To this end the DP has brought on board relevant NGOs, companies, Social Partner Organisations and the National Training Authority. Whilst some partners operate at the national level, others are players at regional and local levels. One of its pilot projects is combining reconciliation and desegregation approaches by experimenting flexible working for female and male management personnel. It is testing whether senior managers must work full-time if they wish to further develop their career.

It is well known that in most European countries many women opt out of employment in the senior levels because of family responsibilities. They are not able to work the long hours traditionally seen as required of management and still carry out their parental and other responsibilities. This phenomenon has meant that women's career paths are often cut short and women do not reach their full potential. Similarly organisations suffer from not having access to all of the talent available. The converse of this is that male managers who do participate in the long hours culture miss out on important time with their children and families. They too lack work-life balance.

The DP is working with employers to encourage them to identify managers, both male and female, who wish to retain their management positions, but to work more flexibly. This can entail working a shorter working week (e.g., job sharing, part-time work or reduced hours), flexible hours, some e-working from home, etc.) The idea is for employee and employer to find an optimal package of flexible working that will suit both.

Obviously, this pilot project has implications for reconciliation of work and family life, but is also making an impact on desegregation, since it seeks to encourage and retain women in management positions, which will help to desegregate the labour market.

[National Flexi-Work-Partnership, IE-19](#)

3.2. DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND BENCHMARKING TOOLS

Any comprehensive approach to establishing a local, regional or national plan to make gender equality a reality must rely on an in-depth analysis of the current situation. Only if strengths and weaknesses of existing equal opportunities policies and practices are clearly visible and

persisting patterns of discrimination are understood, a solid foundation for forward looking strategies can be rolled out. A thorough analysis must also screen the relevant mainstream provision (from training and employment systems, social and health care, transport and urban or rural development, to entrepreneurship support or political participation), which is often labelled as “gender neutral”, but in reality tailored to male norms. Many DPs are therefore embarking on the creation of observatories to measure, monitor and benchmark the gender equality performance of local communities, regions or even Member States. This may either include data on reconciliation or desegregation issues, in many cases the ambition is to link both and to emphasise the interconnections.

In Italy the SVIPO DP is developing an observatory to examine gender policies and their impact on real life. The observatory is working with a bottom-up approach, involving the target groups through an Internet Forum. Women and men are contributing to the Forum, explaining about gender related problems on the labour market.

The idea is to use indicators based on the so-called VISPO system of monitoring and evaluating gender policies, and to confirm or confute them through the debate held within the Forum. The Internet Fora are set up at both the DP's national website and at the common website of the transnational partnership. Specific discussions are also led by focus groups at territorial level in each national DP. Here so called “macro-subjects”, such as reconciliation of live times; women entrepreneurs and Equal Opportunities in general are being considered.

[SVIPO- IT-G-BAS-026](#)

In Spain a DP has involved a “Gender Group” as a member of its large partnership, which is observing the implementation of equality policies in the region of Sierra Mágina.

The group was created to encourage citizens to keep a watchful eye on the development of gender equality in the daily reality of their communities. Group members belong to the Rural Development Association Sierra Mágina, which is a network of volunteers. To assess and monitor actions for equal opportunities, they set out:

- *to collect information about equality policies in all the towns in the region;*
- *to cross-check the information received, e.g. to track what is really happening on the ground and to assess the actions both directly and through interviews with city councillors or mayors;*
- *to analyse all results obtained; and*
- *to propose an Equality Action Plan.*

As a second step the group had planned to follow-up any scheduled activities for gender equality. This was intended to check whether the actions had taken place according to plan, budget and schedule, if and how changes had occurred or if activities had been implemented, without having been documented. Eventually this second stage became obsolete, because none of the city councils covered had an equal opportunities programme, and units or departments working on women's issues did not exist.

Given this result and similar findings of women's groups in the region, the Gender Group conceived the First Gender Equality Plan of Sierra Mágina. It is being promoted and proposed to all the city councils as a 4-year exercise. Each council is encouraged to select and adopt a number of measures, which it deems particularly relevant. These will then be implemented during a period of three years whilst being carefully observed by the Gender Group. The fourth year will be dedicated to the assessment and follow – up of the plan.

[RED ADALBA, ES-187](#)

In the framework of transnational cooperation observatories gain an additional dimension, since they allow for comparison of European Member States. Given the new Employment Guidelines of the EES which are linked to numerical targets, EQUAL observatories can create a competitive edge for Governments at all levels through an on-going process of peer reviews and

benchmarking, indicating the gaps between the European level targets¹ and their own track records.

One of the objectives of a Transnational Partnership linking major European Cities in a network supporting reconciliation is creating a Knowledge Centre, which will record reconciliation and time-related good practices. [Madrid City Hall](#), the [Vervey-Jonker Institute](#) (Netherlands) and [Viver](#), led by [Byweb Formação e Informatica](#), an SME based in Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal), are the major players in this part of the TP's work programme. To collect the good practices and to make them comparable, the partners conceived templates on four themes of common interest : family services, mobility, societal dialogue and training. Each template is structured to provide information on the context, programme design and programme implementation and impact.

[European Cities for Reconciliation, TCA 531](#)

3.3. LINKING GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EQUAL territorial alliances for equal opportunities are linking their activities targeted at final beneficiaries to local or regional economic development, and seek to plead business cases for gender equality. Projects are joining forces with companies, economic development agencies and relevant public authorities, and like for any stakeholder in a process of change it is important for all partners to see and understand the potential benefits of change. DPs try to move beyond the original equal opportunities approach that was built on arguments based on social justice and democracy. Although their intrinsic value and truth must be upheld, it has become clear that they are not necessarily the best starting point for an open dialogue with employers and other economic players. The DPs are very aware that a new and fresh approach is needed, particularly as some key players view equal opportunities as favouring women at the expense of men.

3.3.1. Involving the right partners and maintaining their commitment

To be able to exploit potential synergies between equal opportunities and economic development DPs have – as a first step – been carefully observing and evaluating the impact of current and future economic and social trends on female and male employment in their territories. At the same time they explored how big and small enterprises, both public and private, could benefit from gender equality and diversity oriented personnel strategies.

Echopool Ltd., a multi media company, which is a partner in the “Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft” DP, has based its work on the trend for more and more flexibility in the workplace. It is aiming to improve the situation of parents with highly irregular working hours whilst supporting SMEs to develop a financing model for a flexible provision of quality childcare in Berlin. Compared to other parts of Germany child care services in the capital are quite satisfying, but even so, parents whose jobs are not restricted to the usual nine-to-five working day find it difficult to find appropriate solutions. This is particularly true for single mothers and fathers.

Companies and federal administrations that moved to the city after German unification are backing the parents' demand, making needs tailored care packages one of their requirements when considering to invest and create jobs in Berlin.

Thanks to early dissemination activities echopool was invited to become a permanent member of the "Committee for the Promotion of Flexible Child Care in Berlin", which was initiated by the Regional Ministry for Economy, Labour and Women. The first task of this committee was to compile a booklet that gives parents an overview of child care services in the city – with a special focus on those with longer and more flexible opening hours. Based on its own experiences with setting up a childcare facility in a business centre, echopool was able to point out the business advantages, which can be gained by companies if child care is integrated into the benefit packages for employees.

¹ Guideline 6: Promote gender equality in employment and pay; Elimination of gender gaps in employment and halving of gender pay gaps in every Member State by 2010; Childcare places available for 33% of 0-3 year olds and 90% of those from 3 years to mandatory school age in each Member State by 2010

At the same time, echopool developed a constant dialogue with Berlin's Youth Authority (Landesjugendamt) to promote the idea that child care should be flexible enough to allow mothers AND fathers to combine parenting and working life. Dismantling bureaucratic hurdles and making it as easy as possible for employers to support their employees through organising adequate childcare is part of the strategy. EQUAL good practices, including those emerging from transnational cooperation, are being used to create innovative and flexible ways to organise and finance child care.

[Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft, DE-EA-31910](#)

Because of the involvement of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) an Irish project was able to greatly enhance credibility with employers. The experience of this DP, which is – among other reconciliation strategies - promoting flexible work arrangements for male and female managers to counter the perception that senior managers cannot work on a flexi-time basis, shows the importance of valuing and maintaining contacts once they have been established.

Trinity College Dublin, the lead partner of the project, had developed a good relationship when working with IBEC in a previous programme, and the fact that both employers and the University value their interaction in projects such as these paved the way to a new cooperation in the framework of EQUAL. IBEC's Director of Social Policy sits on the DP's steering committee, thus adding to the DP's credibility in the business world. This helps to convince employers of the business advantages of flexible working, which is central to the project.

An important part of the strategy is to win over 'hard nosed' business people who often cannot see the possible synergies of equal opportunities and business development, as they have been persuasively put by the Marketing Director of Proctor and Gamble at a conference run by IBEC². The most salient points are that diversity (including gender) in an organisation is a source of competitive advantage. True diversity can only happen if applicants are attracted from the total talent pool, when individuals have the opportunity to develop their full potential and progress on merit and this, in turn, makes it possible to retain people in whom the employer has invested. On a wider level, such policies and practices contribute to a company's PR image and engenders a more imaginative and creative ethos in the company. The DP's interaction with its Working Party of Employers also confirms this assessment.

[National Flexi-Work-Partnership, IE-19](#)

3.3.2. Presenting business cases for equal opportunities

Many DPs aiming to convince economic key players of the value of exploiting the synergies between gender equality policies and economic growth are concentrating their strategies on the advantages employers could gain by recruiting a more diverse workforce and by adapting training and working conditions to the needs of women.

In Italy, the "Raedes-A.Cant.O." DP is working with focus groups that are aimed to analyse and reflect the obstacles to gender equality in the building sector, to explore the benefits of linking gender and technical competencies, and to convince key people of the added value to be gained by gender specific approaches. The DP is running six focus groups in the regions of Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Lazio where it also experimenting training schemes for women in construction.

Facilitated by construction and gender equality experts, the focus groups are designed as a guided journey through which participants can express and confront their points of view and then jointly develop solutions to persisting discrimination as identified by the preliminary research of the DP. The groups are open to all players, allowing direct contact between workers (women and men), employers and practitioners from construction sites.

² A copy of the presentation by Jesper Wiegandt – Marketing Director, Proctor and Gamble can be accessed via Circa. [\(Place doc on Circa and create link.\)](#)

Brainstorming has been considered as the best approach to organise the meetings and to make participants reflect on encountered manifestations of discrimination, on its origins and causes and on possible solutions. Relevant information is being introduced by the experts, but also through printed materials and Internet based tools, and further developed during the debate, focusing on questions and issues such as:

- *What is meant, in general, by a “gender approach”;*
- *The gender approach as a strategy for attitudinal changes;*
- *Linking gender competencies and technical competencies;*
- *Making the gender approach operational in the construction trades (top-down commitment to gender equality, flexible work arrangements, attention to discriminative phenomenon, legislation);*
- *Modalities of the future development of trades that were always intended exclusively for men: establishing and valuing differences;*
- *Modification of organisational structures in the sector that would make women’s integration easier.*

The choice of the focus group methodology as highly participative communication tool, which stimulates exchange and comparisons, responds to the DP’s conviction that the only possible way to promote equal opportunities and to fight gender discrimination is a direct and lasting contact with the sector’s key players. Encouraging them to consider the business advantages that qualified women are able to generate in the different working contexts of the building sector, particularly if that message is conveyed by other employers, is proving to be the best strategy to reach that goal.

[Raedes-A.Cant.O..IT-S-MDL 225](#)

Other DPs are addressing the demographic challenge, counting on the fact that in most Member States the massive move of older workers towards retirement and the shrinking numbers of new entrants to the labour market require employers to develop forward looking strategies to ensure future labour supply and qualification levels of human resources. Although the issues of gender equality and diversity are often not explicitly mentioned, they are likely to arise naturally as an element of change. The construction industry is a sector where lack of qualified labour and skills gaps are becoming an important concern.

Until now, both blue and white collar jobs in the construction industry in Sweden have been dominated by men of Swedish origin. However, this staunch domain of “white males” is facing a dramatic reduction in its traditional labour supply. With increasing numbers of the current workforce nearing retirement, it has been estimated that the industry will need to fill 90.000 job vacancies in the coming decade. Similarly, the trade unions in this sector will need to attract 120.000 new members if they are to maintain their status and role as social partners.

In EQUAL, leading organisations from the construction sector have been committing themselves, for the first time, to combating gender and ethnic discrimination and labour market segregation. LIBRA has forged a strong coalition between the Swedish Construction Federation, the Building Workers Union and the Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in the Industry, Galaxen that is a rehabilitation organisation and Ynsab, a service enterprise for vocational training. All these partners are in a position to disseminate and mainstream the DP’s outcomes. This powerful inner circle has been further strengthened by strategically chosen partners, ranging from the National Labour Market Administration (AMS), to small and large companies, including market leaders such as Skanska, NCC, Peab and JM.

[LIBRA- SE-23](#)

The approach of the Scottish “WAP” DP is also addressing the demographic challenge, but from a different angle. Through innovative quality guidance the project is working to help reduce the increasing costs of care services required for the rapidly growing numbers of older people. Through its Virtual College, Glasgow Caledonian University, the WAP partner leading this activity, supports gender issues by providing accessible on-line training for care workers that are principally female, giving them the opportunity for advancement as carers or registered nurses (vertical desegregation). Additionally the increased capacity achieved through growing numbers

of skilled care workers for the elderly creates the opportunity for those currently struggling to care for elderly members of the family to return or engage to a greater extent with the job market. Key to this is the enhanced quality of care available that results in a much higher quality of life for people in care institutions.

With greater availability and better quality of care for the elderly, it is clear that there is a corresponding economic advantage for both the care homes participating in the DP and the industry in general with a resulting benefit to the national economy as a whole. This stems from the role of the Virtual College in the development of Best Practice Statements which are clearly linked to economic benefits for care sector employers and the community.

The Best Practice Statements (link to reconciliation doc) are designed to guide practice and promote a consistent and cohesive approach to care. During the live span of EQUAL, WAP is addressing four crucial areas in care of elder and particularly frail older people:

- *Nutrition;*
- *Early Detection of Depression;*
- *Promoting Activity;*
- *Oral Health.*

The statements will be reviewed and updated every 3 years, and the responsibility for the implementation of statements will rest at local level.

To convince employers in the care industry the DP is building on a large body of evidence on how quality improvements can significantly reduce costs, - for example for the treatment of depression. The National Institute of Mental Health considers depression in people aged 65 and older to be a major public health problem. Studies have shown that amongst those diagnosed with depression older people use a disproportionately high level of health care resources. They consume 24% of all prescribed medications, 14% of hospital bed days, and 13% of all G. P. visits.

A similarly convincing case can be made for well-balanced and individually adjusted nutrition for older people. Studies indicate that 40% of hospital food is wasted, which results in patients receiving only 70% of their energy and protein requirements. This can largely be prevented or treated with appropriate screening and management³. The National Health Service spends approx. £1.5 billion on food annually. National estimates are that 30-50% of hospital food is wasted, with a monetary value calculated to be £45 million each year⁴. With the inclusion of labour and overheads, this cost rises to £144 million annually. There is also the hidden cost of the extra ill health associated with under-nutrition. Some hospitals typically spend approximately £800,000 on enteral and parenteral nutrition. The 1992 the King's Fund report⁵ calculated that provision of comprehensive nutrition support would result in a 5-day reduction in hospital stay for approximately 10% of patients. The consequent saving was estimated to be £266 million annually in the UK.

Given this significant potential of cost reduction, it is not amazing that within five months of the publication of WAP's first Best Practice Statement on nutrition a national survey reported that half of the care homes and hospitals were already changing practices in response to that statement.

[WAP Scotland – Ukqb-69](#)

A number of DPs are focusing their business cases for equal opportunities on the implications of globalisation, particularly for large companies. They are developing concepts of diversity management as a means to broaden the scope of the discussion with employers. Diversity

³ Schenker S, (2003): Under-nutrition in the UK, Nutrition Bulletin: Volume 28 Issue 1 Page 87, March

⁴ Edwards & Nash (1997) Catering Services. Measuring the wasteline, Health Services Journal, 107, 5579, 26-27; Fenton J, Eves A, Kipps M, O'Donnell C (1995): The nutritional implications of food wastage in continuing care wards for elderly patients with mental health problems. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 8: 239-48.

⁵ Lennard-Jones (1992): A positive approach to nutrition as treatment. London: Kings Fund

management focuses on individuals and their competencies rather than on groups. The starting point is the competitiveness of the company. In the past companies would often operate on a regional or national basis having a relatively homogeneous client-base. Clients were quite well known in terms of their expectations, likes and dislikes. Economic globalisation leads to a diversification of markets and an increasing number of competitors. Companies re-position themselves in these evolving heterogeneous markets, starting from a homogeneous internal culture. Mergers can be the springboard for change, as well as the need to identify suitable business partners in other geographical areas, other markets, etc. These changes, however, bring different cultures into the company itself. Examples are different work practices, a different ethnic mix, or different styles of management. The internal culture diversifies. Management has to deal with these changes in order to maintain and advance the competitiveness of the company.

This is also the case for the German Telekom Corporation, which is a member of a large Berlin based DP focusing on desegregation in the ICT sector. In the past decade the company, which used to be one of the country's largest public employers, was privatised and is turning more and more into a global player. Striving to re-enforce its international market position the Telekom AG aims to value and strengthen the diversity of its workforce. Thanks to EQUAL the corporation's Diversity Manager whose office is directly reporting to the Board is developing new approaches, which integrate gender equality into diversity management.

In the framework of the DP diversity reporting is being tested to be eventually implemented as a regular part of personnel development. Diversity reporting collects, evaluates and communicates data on all measures that promote equal opportunities in the context of managing diversity. The approach allows to detect and measure successful investments in equal opportunities. These are then documented and presented to senior management and board so that internal and external benchmarks can be developed.

To tap into so far unused female potential the DP established a mentoring programme, which equips female managers with specific management techniques that the company is keen to introduce. The scheme enhances women's opportunities to access senior management. At the same a benchmarking exercise is applied to this and other equality measures implemented in the different departments of the German Telekom's hub in Berlin. In addition, the DP is experimenting with "cross-mentoring", i.e. mentors and mentees from different companies, organisations and public administrations are working together.

The idea is to assess the situation of female employees and to measure the effectiveness of equality policies in terms of business advantages gained. Results are being used to underline the need for gender mainstreaming to be included in Telekom's corporate identity.

[Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft, DE-EA-31910](#)

Another avenue to emphasise the economic relevance of gender equality policies and practices is to use the potential of female entrepreneurship to the advantage of a local community or a region. Family support services can be an important component for economic development in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, since they increase both the availability and flexibility of workers with care responsibilities. Besides setting up small companies and social economy enterprises providing childcare or elderly care, transport and domestic services, EQUAL DPs are also helping unemployed women to set up businesses in other promising market niches in their territories of operation. They may be tiny ventures at the beginning, but in addition to the jobs created for the entrepreneurs themselves, they can encourage other people who are also no born entrepreneurs and add to the diversification of economic activities in a territory.

One of the main objectives of the Deloa Group is to generate employment for rural women as well as to encourage the creation and promotion of small businesses. Stimulated by the success of a social economy enterprise that is growing and selling plants to wholesalers, four women set up a retail nursery and basic maintenance service for gardens. Trebore-Gardening is based in one of the villages participating in the DP

and offers its products and services to private customers . During one year the women had been provided with training courses to acquire both gardening and entrepreneurial skills and supported by the DP to set up their business, which may – over time – yield even more jobs for other women.

[DELOA – ES-188](#)

3.4. EQUALITY PLANS AND PACTS

Forging territorial equality plans and pacts requires a strong and multifaceted alliance of players, coordinated by a core group that is dedicated to bring on board the less committed. The typical composition of gender equality oriented DPs mirrors the attempt to involve all players that can contribute the necessary expertise (training providers, equality bodies, women's organisations and grass roots groups), but also others who are in a position to enhance the sustainability of the plan (policy makers, public authorities at local, regional and national level, employment services, employers and social partner organisations). This mix prevails in geographical partnerships aiming to create change in a given territory, as well as in the so-called sectoral partnerships focusing on an economic sector or occupational field. The latter concentrate on growth sectors where women are underrepresented, such as ICT, science, engineering and construction, but also on the health and social care sector where they outnumber men.

Most DPs are forging their gender equality alliances in the framework of relevant public policy priorities as opposed to a “policy niche” dedicated only to equal opportunities, and they clearly favour a decentralised approach. A French EQUAL partnership has built a chain of arguments to underpin that approach:

The starting point is that public policies must be developed on a territorial basis, i.e. in a region, a province, a city, or even a district of a city – certainly not at national level. This does not mean that national governments should be kept out of social policy issues. They must have a role of providing incentives, coordination and regulation. Also, governments are the only institutions that can reduce inequalities between citizens nationwide and disparities between regions and cities.

The second basic principle is that local public policies must be the result of dialogue and negotiation between all the different stakeholders. Political institutions, (local) bureaucracies, etc. are no longer the exclusive decision-makers on the “public good”. Classical external “experts” are still required. But new experts with first-hand knowledge and expertise have appeared in the political arena. These are the beneficiaries of local public policies: children, parents, youth, working women and men, elderly people - in short, all citizens. The DP believes that in a period of time when most citizens feel alienated or at least insufficiently connected with their elected officials and express their diffidence through low participation rates in elections, a local or territorial dialogue is more necessary than ever.

It is crucial to involve companies in this process that must reach beyond collective bargaining. This includes the negotiation and development of new services enabling the articulation of work and private life, which are not only catering for the companies' staff, but also for the entire population living in their territorial environment.

Besides promoting “societal dialogue” in the different French locations where it operates, the DP is also organising a transnational exchange of relevant good practices. Across borders, training sessions are being organised for local actors that want to develop practices of societal dialogue.

[Coordination des temps de vie dans les territoires FR-NAT-2001-1433](#)

A Spanish DP based in Barcelona has a similar vision. Besides establishing an Internet based Forum to initiate and support the dialogue amongst partners and eventually a much wider audience, it is trying to relay the more traditional forms of dialogue that it is leading in its territory – the larger Barcelona agglomeration. Actions are targeted at the business world, the trade unions and the eight municipalities involved in the project.

Based on the results of a study covering 100 companies (large enterprises and SMEs, both public and private) the DP is developing a work-life-balance model benefiting both employers and employees. In a second step the DP selected ten companies from the sample to run pilot projects testing the envisaged package. The idea is to involve enterprises that can be regarded as pioneers in this field (for instance members of the OPTIMA⁶ network), companies having expressed the need to introduce family friendly personnel policies and others claiming to have no such needs. Exchange of experience and dialogue amongst peers, i.e. the employers, are expected to yield an improved model to be offered to and negotiated with an increasing number of companies that may be interested to integrate equal opportunities into their HR policies and corporate identity.

Using the outcomes of this pilot programme, the DP is introducing new solutions to reconciling work and family life into collective bargaining. To strengthen this approach it is also organising courses for Trade Union officials, members of work committees and shop stewards to sensitise them for equal opportunities in general and reconciliation issues in particular.

All municipalities that are partners in the DP have been running an evaluation of their existing family support systems and the needs of the population. Based on the results they are developing new flexible care services for children and other dependants, especially senior citizens. In many cases this includes training women to become carers and/or supporting them to set up small business or social economy enterprises in the care sector.

The family support services also contain a “mobility” component: Jointly with the Barcelona Metropolitan Transport Services and the local communities, the DP aims to improve the situation for commuters, particularly for working parents.

[TEMPORA, ES-437](#)

3.5. CREATING AND/OR STRENGTHENING BRIDGING FUNCTIONS

Both reconciliation and desegregation DPs setting up territorial alliances tend to design and test “bridging functions” and to create programmes to train “agents of change”. This includes equality advisors, diversity and work-life-balance experts who are placed or to be placed in local or regional authorities, in public and private enterprises or in NGOs and advocacy groups. The envisaged profiles of those movers and shakers may be different and depending from their institutional base, but they all share a strong element of mediation. Whilst promoting equal opportunities for women and men, their role is also to reconcile different needs and interests of employees and employers, public authorities and citizens or even different generations.

3.5.1. Gender equality bodies

Strategies to strengthen equal opportunities infrastructures are being developed after an analysis of the existing provision. In some countries DPs found that the current provision lacked visibility or was not sufficiently articulated to the various players (policy makers, authorities, employers etc.) that have a crucial role in the implementation of diversity, equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming. To improve their visibility and professional standing, a German DP has developed a support programme for local and regional equality counsellors and women working in NGOs and projects.

The Equality Office of the city of Göttingen, a partner in a German DP, which is focusing on women’s access to ICT occupations, offers a training course for gender equality advisors and experts, working in different environments. They can acquire knowledge and skills to set up and manage a Website and Internet Forum for their respective fields and audiences. The week long programme teaches advanced ICT, but also presentation and communication skills. At the end of the week participants are able to establish or improve their organisation’s appearance on the Internet. Follow-up modules and individual support

⁶ Gender equality auditing and award system

are helping to further improve their skills and products. The emerging websites can be placed on www.Frauen-Online-Niedersachsen.de - courtesy of the Land of Lower Saxony.

The scheme is also intended to increase the number of women and gender equality specific websites on the World Wide Web and to contribute to adapting this medium to the needs of female users.

[Frauen in t.i.m.e, DE-EA-14811](#)

Coordinated by KETHI, the National Gender Institute, a Greek DP is working to articulate existing public gender equality bodies to new company based equality units. To promote the adoption of "equality plans" in organisations and enterprises the DP designed a training and support programme, which is implemented in Athens and six of the 12 Greek regions.

The 30 trainees come from three large corporations (banking, transport, mass media/new technologies) based in the capital and from regional centres supporting female employment and entrepreneurship. The enterprises seconded eleven employees to participate and to develop and implement company specific "equality plans"⁷. The task of 19 participants working in the regional structures is to support local businesses to set up positive action plans.

The training includes the most recent developments in equal opportunities policies (with a special emphasis on the labour market), but also methodological knowledge and skills to plan, implement and monitor gender equality action plans in companies. The programme takes account of the numerous roles the future Equality Advisors will have to perform. In the three corporations in Athens, for instance, it will be paramount to establish a supportive environment for their endeavour and to present a credible business case for equal opportunities. This entails to inform and involve all players from senior management levels to individual employees. One of the three companies has established an Equality Committee ten years ago, which will implement the action plan emerging from the project. As a consequence of being involved in the DP another company will adopt the same model.

Participants coming from the regions have to commit themselves to work with at least two companies. Thanks to the training they are growing into a new role (in addition to their normal work) that will enhance links to the business community in their area. Their main task is to encourage and support employers in launching initiatives that ensure equal opportunities for women and men in their companies. In addition, the women are acting as local resource persons on all issues related to equality in the labour market. In an effort to achieve better coordination and more efficiency of the various actions, they are connecting different key players (including the Regional Governments' Committees for Equality, local authorities, chambers of commerce, etc.) in each region.

The regional advisors are also participating in the Andromeda Network which was created in 2000 by KETHI. In the framework of a programme funded until the year 2008, this network is linking all counselling services to women. Activities launched under EQUAL can thus be continued for a longer period of time, which will help to integrate the DP's achievements as sustainable parts into the regular work of the counselling units in each region.

[Andromeda – GR-200955](#)

Similar to Andromeda, some DPs seek to create new structures and occupational profiles which are designed to be complimentary to the work of existing equality bodies. In Barcelona the Tempora DP is developing a resource centre focusing on work-life-balance, which will support local institutions, public and private companies and trade unions.

⁷ This process is being used as case studies which will provide input for the intended "Guide for Employers to introduce equality plans".

The concept is based on an in-depth analysis of the social challenges related to the dilemma of reconciling working and family life and the joint commitment of all intervening organisations to create an environment, which enables a better articulation of work and private life. To that end the DP is:

- *Creating the profile and position of a mediator to facilitate reconciliation conflicts emerging between employees, companies, local communities and citizens;*
- *Offering awareness raising and training events to Human Resource development staff in companies, trade unions and public administrations;*
- *Providing counselling and advice to municipalities for planning and organising family support services, safe neighbourhoods, mobility and reorganisation of “city times” (schedules of transport systems and opening hours of public authorities, care institutions, schools and shops etc.);*
- *Disseminating good practice through transnational work to promote the establishment of a European Network of Reconciliation Resource Centres.*

[TEMPORA, ES-437](#)

Mediation concepts are also being created or further improved by a number of TPs. Often, partners embark on the parallel development of such schemes, which are aimed to be complimentary and packaged into a set of tools to be widely disseminated at both the national and transnational level. The Diapason Transnational Partnership, linking DPs in Italy and Spain, is thus combining mentoring and mediation in an equal opportunities context and the partners are benefiting from each other's results.

The Spanish AVIGUEM DP is creating a professional profile of equality mediators (Agente de Igualdad de Oportunidades) and developing a training and personal development itinerary integrating all necessary steps to take on this role. The activities of SVIPO, the Italian partner, are focussing on mentoring whole companies as a strategy to prevent and combat the various forms of gender segregation and discrimination in the workplace. The DP is organising seminars in the enterprises, bringing together employees, management and business owners to make them all aware of the relevant legislation. C.G.I.L., a national trade union and a partner in the DP, is in charge of this first step, which is undertaken in cooperation with other national associations and the Equal Opportunity Counsellor, based at the Italian Ministry of Labour. The on-going process of mentoring is handled by the Equal Opportunities Counsellor as part of her institutional duties. For her this approach offers a good opportunity to promote the use of parental leave by fathers and the compliance with gender equality regulations rules in the participating companies.

[Diapason – TCA 1312](#)

Partners of another TP are jointly developing a training programme for equality mediators who will become active in public administrations and private companies in France, Italy and Spain.

The programme is provided to five participants in each partner country. The selected trainees are women and men who will become Equality Mediators working directly with the Director of Human Resources. As a first step they are being supported to develop equality programmes in the institutions where they work. In addition they will train other people in other organizations in order to multiply the number of equality managers.

In France, for instance, the first five trainees include two employees of a medium sized and a large firm, two working in a public administration and in government and another in an NGO. The programme is based on distance learning (4 one hour modules in English, Spanish, Italian and French)), independent and collective study and discussion of basic classical books and tutorials with experts from the local Universities. Each trainee has work on a project to improve gender equality in his or her institution.

Three transnational meetings are organized for the trainees to compare their learning process and to discuss their respective projects.. The programme lasts for a period of five months including evaluation. It is covering the following steps:

- *Introduction to integrating a gender perspective in current work;*

- *Equality policies;*
- *Gender policies applied to economic development and unemployment;*
- *Case studies in a gender perspective.*

*Coordination des temps de vie dans les territoires FR-NAT-2001-1433
European Cities for Reconciliation, TCA 531*

3.5.2. Social and labour market mediation

Another Spanish DP analysed the problems of municipalities encountered when trying to adapt their policies and practices to the needs of the population. Finding solutions to the various forms of inequality and discrimination is normally the task of experts and technical staff responsible to tailor community services to the needs of disadvantaged groups. According to the DP, support measures are often not sufficiently taking into account the very specific needs of the different groups. Also, new measures are mostly based on quantitative data and on what municipal staff assumes the potential users of these services require. To reconcile the interests and needs of both municipalities and disadvantaged people the Red Adalba DP proposes to set up “Research and Mediation Agencies for Employability and Equal Opportunities” (AIMPEI) and to introduce “Social Mediation” as a new professional profile. The idea is based on the fact that most technical and professional staff employed in the context of social and equal opportunities policies (equality advisors, social workers, street workers, local development agents, etc.) work or are contracted individually. Normally in Spain they cannot rely on a team of peers to discuss and improve methodologies, approaches and perspectives. Consequently, interventions are “patched up” to attend to immediate problems, but hardly able to tackle the roots of inequality and discrimination.

The concept

The DP sees Social Mediation as a strategy which involves a change in attitudes, taking into account not only the balance between supply and demand but also the needs and requirements of the specific target groups (individuals and/or institutions). This new balance should enhance opportunities of excluded groups to access and retain employment and improve their quality of life under more equal conditions. Social Mediation is no direct conflict resolution strategy, but rather a tool to find, document and transfer relevant information in multiple directions: bottom-up, top-down, or any other route of access. This broad knowledge base helps to find more adequate solutions, to make resources more profitable, and to improve political and administrative processes, adjusting them to social change. The approach can help to maximise the impact of public resources by using appropriate technologies; facilitating multi-agency approaches and thus preventing the currently existing overlap and unnecessary duplication of services.

The Organisational Framework

The Agencies are conceived as pluralistic, independent and interdisciplinary “entrepreneurial structures” which are connected through intra- and inter-territorial networks, established in or related to universities. They offer easy to access, economically viable expert services to public authorities, supporting them to tackle the complex problems derived from inequality. Whilst helping policy makers and administrations develop measures to prevent discrimination, to combat unemployment and to create jobs for vulnerable groups, the approach ensures that those groups have a say and that their voice is heard in the appropriate places.

As a matter of principle Social Mediation requires a highly qualified working group (there is no individual action). This is reflected in the internal organisation of the Agencies which bring together mediation agents in a broad-based, interdisciplinary advisory group which supports technical, expert and professional staff by providing specialised and contrasted information and research which they could otherwise not access.

The Training Programme

The Social Mediation training targets graduates in Human and Social Sciences, Law and Economics who are often unemployed, especially if they are women. They are offered a post-graduate course enabling them to work as a mediator. They are studying relevant

tools such as ICT and participatory action research and learn to apply them when analysing the obstacles to equal treatment in employment. At the same time they acquire skills to reconcile the interests and needs of both the citizens and the intervening technical, social, political, economic and labour institutions. After successful completion of the course trainees are expected to find employment in the new Social Mediation Agencies.

[RED ADALBA, ES-187](#)

3.5.3. Intergenerational mediation

Mediating the needs and interests of different generations is the objective of the VIVER DP in Portugal. It is aiming to transform existing care facilities into social centres with a clear intergenerational dimension. The approach takes into account that most providers of care are primarily concerned with meeting the needs of their “clients”. When looking for childcare, the priorities of working mothers and fathers are focussed on a convenient geographical location, opening hours and basics such as meals or hygiene, and similar priorities seem to be applied when people are trying to find care solutions for other dependants. Educational aspects or possible personal involvement appear seldom to be relevant. To strengthen intergenerational relationships the DP seeks to reconcile the traditional values of the extended family with nowadays social needs.

The strategy is centred on a new professional profile: the “intergenerational animator”, which is designed to bridge the gap between the needs of working parents, those of their children and dependant relatives. An “intergenerational animator” is trained to plan and develop activities bringing the three generations together. The underlying principle is that quality care in early childhood and old age settings is not only a crucial support to working parents, but forms a key element in children’s early development and learning, and older persons’ fulfilment and satisfaction. To date professionals in health and social care have no academic education or specific training to perform intergenerational activities.

The training is a combination of formal learning and on-the- job training, organised in modules. The first pilot scheme involves twelve participants with multiple academic backgrounds (psychology, sociology, social care, socio-cultural animation, etc). All have experience in working with children or elder people. Subjects taught include:

- *Human growth and development: impact of family and parenting on child development, key-factors to ensure quality care for children and other dependants;*
- *Care organisations and social policies: legislation, guidance and local/national initiatives for social care; roles, responsibilities and risks for achieving optimal outcomes;*
- *Conflict mediation: problem solving strategies, handling emotions and stress: when to listen, to be silent and to communicate;*
- *General theories on children’s and adult’s learning: building on past and present developments to create a contemporary model of social work;*
- *Personal and social values: respect, social needs and welfare provision; valuing and developing the potential of children, young people and elder persons;*
- *Diversity: equal opportunities approaches taking account of differences such as age, culture, religion, economic and social status;*
- *Empowerment: developing intra- and inter-generational work, involving parental responsibility and improving local commitments and services.*

To ensure that the new activities will carry on after the end of the VIVER project, participants chosen for the training are professionals employed by the partner institutions of the DP.

[VIVER, PT-2001-169](#)

3.6. GENDER EQUALITY AUDITS AND AWARD SYSTEMS

A number of DPs and TPs are developing and testing auditing and award systems for equal opportunities performance, often including ethnic diversity. Obviously, the results of those audits

can provide a solid base for any employer to develop needs-tailored actions, which may enhance their compliance with existing legislation and strengthen their business priorities.

The JIVE DP in the UK, for instance, is emphasising the advantages to be gained by national training organisations when committing themselves to gender equality and diversity.

The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) seeks to integrate gender equality and diversity into its largest training programme, the National Apprenticeship Scheme for Engineering Construction (NASEC). It belongs to the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship Programme (which is a priority on the UK Government's agenda for vocational training) and leads young people to specialise in either a craft or upstream technician specialisation with a National/Scottish Vocational Qualification level 3. JIVE is supporting the ECITB's endeavour to attract and recruit more young women and ethnic minorities to the sector. The relevant sub-project is auditing recruitment processes and training environments as well as companies that offer placements for the women apprentices. Case study research on the impact of JIVE initiatives with the sector is being carried out. This has involved a review of their recruitment procedures by interviewing female applicants, some of whom were successfully recruited, others not. Interviews with NASEC apprentices to determine their training experiences are currently being undertaken. Documentation from this is informing the content of training materials for all the ECITB recruitment field staff, administration teams and management.

In addition, JIVE is working the Property Services National Training Organisation (PSNTO) to develop and test cultural audits with a number of organisations across the four regions where the DP operates. The audits provide an opportunity to employers to review their working practices and to look at areas where they can develop policies and practices to make them more women friendly. In order to focus follow up actions, a range of JIVE tools are being developed with which employer liaison consultants can work with companies to develop good practice. These include developing company mentoring schemes; staff training to employers and employees; flexible/work-life-balance training; promoting equal pay reviews. Specific issues are being considered and eventually introduced to benefit women returners. It is hoped that these strategies will result not only in attracting more women to the profession, but also in improving retention rates.

[JIVE . UKgb-25](#)

A small group of DPs are seeking to integrate gender equality into existing quality management programmes or other systems of business excellence. Those projects tend to believe that an audit and award system entirely dedicated to gender equality may turn into a “women-only niche”, and not be very attractive to employers. Given the EQUAL objectives, some DPs base their approaches on the Green Paper of the European Commission on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)⁸. In line with the key messages of that policy document, projects perceive being socially responsible as going beyond legal compliance and investing “more” into human capital, the environment, and the relations with stakeholders. To be successful, CSR strategies should be linked to major challenges for enterprises such as attracting and retaining skilled workers. “In this context, relevant measures could include life long learning, empowerment of employees, better information throughout the company, better balance between work, family, and leisure, greater work force diversity, equal pay and career prospects for women, profit sharing and share ownership schemes. (...) Some countries already contribute to promoting companies that are good workplaces by publishing lists of best employers...”⁹.

The Italian DP “Tenere il Tempo”, which is operating in five local communities in a remote mountain area is elaborating a human resources oriented approach towards CSR. It is experimenting with the Social Accountability (SA) 8000¹⁰ system, which incorporates a code of

⁸ Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility, Green Paper, Brussels 2001, http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-dial/csr/greenpaper_en.pdf

⁹ ibidem

¹⁰ Social Accountability 8000 is a voluntary standard for workers rights as part of corporate social responsibility. It was launched in 1997 by the Council of the Economic Priorities Accreditation Agency (CEPAA), recently renamed Social Accountability International (SAI), and focuses mainly on labour practices, e.g., child labour, freedom of association, hours of works and wages.

conduct¹¹, modelled on ISO 9000. This includes the accreditation of auditors and independent monitoring.

The ultimate objective of the DP is to commit employers to take action protecting workers from all forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination, and to join the SA 8000 system. In a first stage the project is developing and testing procedures that ensure equal opportunities in access to employment, recruitment, promotion and retention of workers in any given company. Specific strategies required to integrate gender equality into those different aspects of human resource development are part of the approach. Special emphasis is placed on the needs of women and men in their capacity as mothers and fathers or as carers of ageing parents or other dependants.

After having compiled relevant research and good practice, the DP started a discussion process with local and regional stakeholders and organised a series of information events to stimulate public and private companies to seriously consider an on-going assessment and improvement of their personnel policies in the framework of SA 8000. To many companies this appeared to be a highly ambitious goal that may be difficult to achieve. Therefore the DP is facilitating the process by introducing three different levels of indicators for auditing:

- *The basic indicators look at the relations between company and human resources (i.e. the gender balance: how many women are being employed and at which level of the job hierarchy; how many staff (men and women) have been employed during the last year ; how have women's career paths been developing as compared to men's; and so on,...)*
- *The medium level indicators are focussed on work organisation within the company and its repercussions on the reconciliation dilemma (i.e. are flexible working arrangements being used? What is the situation concerning part-time or telework? Which measures enabling better reconciliation do exist?)*
- *The high level indicators look at the capability of the company to implement personnel policies related to gender equality that are promoting both women and men.*

The indicators are being tested by an evaluation team, (some its members are working in a certification body and are contributing valuable experience and expertise). The final product will be an award, a kind of brand that will let the companies be distinguished from others.

Currently the DP is distributing the set of indicators to all the companies in the region, as a part of a tool kit, which also contains information about relevant legislation and existing incentives for firms, including those promoting equal opportunities. An example of good practice for each indicator is also provided. An accompanying form invites firms to either register for the start of the certification process or for accompaniment and support to get going. The project team, consisting of experts in gender equality and in Total Quality Management is organising training workshops for key people from companies and organisations preparing them to participate in the auditing process.

There are different levels of certification that can be achieved year by year. The idea is to mainstream the approach in the local bodies, and to make the award an integral part of the policies of local bodies. The "social solidarity award" introduced by the Province of Cuneo serves as an example. It gives visibility to firms that employ more people with disability than required by the quota stipulated in the law, and small companies, which are exempted from that regulation, can also qualify for the award.

Langhe Monferrato Roero Consortium, a territorial development agency, which is involving public and private bodies and acting as the lead partner of "Tenere il Tempo", is

¹¹ A code of conduct is a formal statement of the values and business practices of a company and sometimes its suppliers. It is a statement of minimum standards together with a pledge by the company to observe them.

acting as a model to other companies and institutions. It has already introduced practical measures to support employees with care responsibilities, such as for instance tele-work. At the same time the Consortium put a quality management system in place that led to the ISO 9000 certification. Adding specific anti-discrimination procedures to its personnel management is expected to result in a SA 8000 certification. Sharing those experiences within the DP has clearly raised the awareness of the local authorities, enterprises, associations or co-operatives to the need for CSR.

Tenere il Tempo, IT-IT-G-PIE-025

3.7. CREATING AND ENHANCING EQUALITY NETWORKS, INTRODUCING A EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Equality networks have been mushrooming in Europe for quite some time. In many cases their creation was supported by European funding such as the 4th Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men and EMLOYMENT-NOW. Besides linking women's NGOs, "women-only" training providers, gender equality bodies, women politicians and institutions working on gender studies and research, those networks also seek to attract specific groups such as women entrepreneurs, scientists or teachers. Many EQUAL DPs are enhancing those affiliations; yet, at the same time they are connecting them to new or existing networks, which integrate mainstream players. Content wise there is marked shift away from equal opportunities being granted to women as a legal requirement to – for instance when involving employers - making the business advantages more visible, which may emerge from a more gender balanced and satisfied workforce. Advantages to be gained by other players such as local or regional authorities or economic development agencies are also emphasised.

This new approach to equality networks has often shaped the building process of the DPs. They would start out breeding ideas with "natural allies" and then bring mainstream partners on board. This was the case of the VIVER DP in Portugal, which – in the beginning (in Action 1) – consisted of a small group of organisations with interest and expertise in gender equality and intergenerational relations.

This first core group sent out an open invitation to all institutions in the country that might be interested to cooperate, offering them the possibility of running their own sub-project. Candidates had to present a project with a strong potential of contributing to VIVER's main goals and to meet a number of requirements. Potential partners should

- *Develop and test concepts of intergenerational support;*
- *Implement activities with children, young people, senior citizens and families;*
- *Involve at least one social care institution and one "for profit" company; most of the children and elder relatives, cared for by the participating social institutions must be workers of the chosen company;*
- *Involve as many other local institutions and stakeholders as possible;*
- *Participate with at least one professional employed by a partner institution in the pilot training for "Intergenerational animators".*

The rationale of this strategy of building a network is based on several guiding principles which resulted from the preliminary research and developmental work of the first group of partners. They felt it was paramount to choose "projects" with a clear focus on concrete local needs as opposed to "institutions". It was felt that a project approach would be better suited to produce synergies amongst the local actors and to creating local networks. (composed of a company, schools, local authorities, health and social care institutions, etc.). Also, the first core group assumed that additional partners selected through an application process would be more committed than those "simply invited" to join and have a keener interest in setting up local networks. These networks are seen as crucial to mainstreaming the results and to guarantee that the activities will live on after the end of EQUAL financing. The obligation to involve companies is related to the aim of improving the scientific evidence base for business advantages that can be gained through improved work satisfaction and productivity of parents whose needs for quality care have been met.

In the end, five projects with different innovative approaches to intergenerational support and work-life-balance solutions were chosen as additional partners in Action 2. Whilst the

Action 1 partnership was mainly concentrating on policy analysis and research, Action 2 is yielding a network of local networks active "on the ground". For the DP this means to close the intended circle for change: "Policies - Research – Good Practices – Policies".

[VIVER, PT-2001-169](#)

As in earlier European programmes, many TPs are setting up European networks for equal opportunities through their transnational work. In one case, a TP is building a network of major cities in six Member States¹².

True to its name the TP "European Cities Conciliation Network" is building a permanent transnational network of cities and territories committed to reconciliation issues. The core members are the 20 first cities or territories working together, but the TP seeks to enlarge the number of participating local governments under Action 3. This cross-border alliance is working to develop viable solutions to reconciling work and private life at the level neighbourhoods, cities and wider areas – both rural and urban. It also intends to work as a lobbying force to put reconciliation at the top of the policy agenda at local, regional, national and European levels.

The Network is elaborating a "charter" aimed at developing and sharing:

- *A common expertise on reconciliation issues at local levels ;*
- *A common methodology to create and implement local practices for reconciliation;*
- *A common "Knowledge Centre" to disseminate best practices;*
- *A common lobby driven by elected officials of the network cities.*

This Charter was signed by the twenty founding members and submitted to other local governments that already develop reconciliation policies and/or want to initiate reconciliation policies on a local or regional basis.

[European Cities for Reconciliation, TCA 531](#)

Within EQUAL the intended snow-ball effect of this transnational partnership is already happening. For instance, the Italian DP "Con-Tempo" that is creating local Resource Centres for Equal Opportunities in six cities (Pavia, Lodi, Crema, Casalmaggiore, Cremona and Mantua) has joined the network and all the cities involved have signed the "European Cities' Charter for Reconciliation".

Network members organised a "Reconciliation Week" in each country involved in order to promote local reconciliation policies. The European dimension of the "network of cities" is enriching and strengthening the work of Con-Tempo's local resource centres through exchange and import of new ideas and good practices related to:

- *maximising the use of the local resources and socio-economic factors associated with each specific territory;*
- *launching family friendly and work-life-balance oriented actions within public services and public and private organisations including information and awareness raising, needs-tailored approaches for different groups of women; counselling for families; development of new services; consultancy to companies and NGOs; training and incubation schemes for associations, co-operatives and businesses.*

[Con-Tempo, IT-G-LOM-016](#)

¹² Madrid por la igualdad (ES-354); Coordination des temps de vie dans les territoires (FR-NAT-2001-1433) ; Création de services de proximité (FR-LIM-2001-11162); CON-TEMPO-LE CITTA in Rete per la conciliazione dei tempi di vita e di lavoro (IT-IT-G-LOM-016); Europese Mannen Leren Onderzoekers (EMLO)(NL-2001/EQG/0010); Developing Creative Intergenerational Relations (VIVER PT-2001-169).

4. EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment has become a buzzword in strategies and programmes targeting people being discriminated and threatened by social exclusion. Pillar 4 EQUAL DPs and TPs have formulated a working definition of that popular term, which is related to gender equality. Generally, empowerment is defined as a process, which enables women to discover, strengthen and use their – often hidden and un-tapped potential. This includes to help them identify and satisfy their needs, find solutions to problems of labour market access and career development as well as to reconciling work and private life and to have access to resources enabling them to take control of their lives.

Empowerment has both an individual and a group dimension, which is built into the relevant transversal principle of EQUAL, requiring DPs to develop empowerment strategies targeted at both the participating partners and the final beneficiaries. Projects are therefore working with complex, multidimensional concepts, which are to empower:

- The DP or TP as a (temporary, but eventually sustainable) grouping;
- The individual partners of a DP or TP;
- The final beneficiaries as a group in society and in particular women as the larger half of the population; and
- Each beneficiary as an individual.

4.1. FINAL BENEFICIARIES

Researchers, promoters of support programmes, advocacy and self-help groups for disadvantaged people have identified a number of “qualities”¹³ which are achieved through successful empowerment processes. Those “qualities” are reflected in the empowerment strategies of DPs and can roughly be structured in two big clusters.

The first is concerned with gender roles in society and the world of work, and the DPs are supporting beneficiaries to

- Having decision-making power;
- Having access to information and resources;
- Having a range of options from which to make choices (not just yes/no, either/or);
- A feeling that the individual can make a difference;
- Learning to think critically; unlearning social conditioning; seeing things differently;
- Understanding that people have rights and can use them.

The second cluster is focusing on the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy as part of beneficiaries’ personal development process. It includes:

- Learning to redefine who they are (speaking in their own voice);
- Learning to redefine what they can do;
- Learning to redefine their relationships to institutionalised power;
- Not feeling alone; feeling part of a group;
- Effecting change in their life and their community;
- Learning skills (e.g., communication) that the individual defines as important;
- Changing others’ perceptions of one’s competency and capacity to act;
- Coming out of the closet;
- Growth and change that is never ending and self-initiated;
- Increasing one’s positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

4.1.1. Integrating beneficiaries’ views into DP development and decision-making

DPs use different approaches to ensure the influence of final beneficiaries on the programmes they are being offered. One avenue to involve beneficiaries’ views in design and decision-making of DPs is the active participation of organisations and groups representing the different target groups. Those participative mechanisms ascertain not only that the DPs’ training and support

¹³ For instance: http://www.power2u.org/empower/working_def.html;
<http://www.selvhjelp.no/selbsthilfe.html#4> <http://www.itempowerment.org/index.htm>;
<http://www.empowermenttraining.com/home.html>; ;
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/compendia/comp20act31en.pdf>:

programmes are as closely as possible adapted to participants' needs, they can also create a safe environment to develop and test some of the qualities mentioned in cluster 1.

As an integral component of the project, the Irish Flexi-time National Partnership enables the direct participation of members of the target groups through their involvement in Advisory Committees. Some of them have links with the collaborating NGOs (such as Age Action Ireland and Aware, which are national advocacy organisations for older people and people suffering from depression, respectively).

As the project has three main target groups - working parents and people with care responsibilities in management and non-management positions; people with mental health difficulties; and older people - it also has three Advisory Committees, each consisting of members of each of the target groups. These Committees are consulted in the design, planning and implementation of the research and programmatic aspects of the project. A central part of the project is the ongoing interaction between the DP and the three Advisory Committees.

One of the innovative elements of the DP, which will lead to empowerment, is the direct interaction of the Advisory Committees with the Working Party of Employers. The approach is designed to enhance employer awareness and, indeed, greater understanding on both sides, with the anticipation that this will also lead to increased development of innovative flexible working practices for these target groups, and hence greater work-life balance and improved quality of life.

For example, the DP convened a bi-lateral meeting of the Advisory Committee on Mental Health and the Working Party of Employers. This meeting facilitated the dialogue between those who have experienced mental health problems, but who are now recovered, and employers. This dialogue covered topics such as

- *Should there be disclosure or not to an employer;*
- *Stigma against mental health problems;*
- *Ways for employers to be more helpful when employees have mental health problems;*
- *How can one recognise the symptoms of depression, etc.*

[National Flexi-Work Partnership, IE 19](#)

Other DPs combine those more formal structures, which may be unfamiliar to some of the beneficiaries with other strategies that are closer to the everyday life of participants in the project. A German DP aiming to open up career paths in ICT and related occupations for different groups of women has set up a mix of empowerment mechanisms.

As a general principle the DP adopted a strategy to enable participants to speak for themselves, instead of speaking for or about them. This is achieved through supporting group building within the different training programmes (organised as subprojects), but also through personal development modules and - for women immigrants – intensive German language training. At the official launch of the DP, for instance, the immigrant women were encouraged to present their sub-project to the assembled regional key-actors, which greatly strengthened their self-confidence.

At the level of each sub-project participants elect one woman as their representative vis-à-vis the DP. Together with the relevant staff and partner organisations these women are working in three thematic groups focussing on the DP's main lines of action - vocational guidance and initial training; further education and training; and in-house training for companies.

In the framework of the sub-projects targeting girls and young women, a "girls council" was created which has its say when it comes to designing and organising activities and visibility strategies.

[Frauen in t.i.m.e, DE-EA-14811](#)

4.1.2. Personal development as empowerment strategy

Some DPs consider that formal participation of all its beneficiaries in the decision-making process of a steering group may not yield the kind of empowerment they envisage. A German DP, for instance, encouraged its sub-projects targeted at different groups of women to develop approaches at that level.

Project learning, which is one of the training methodologies used in most sub-projects, can considerably strengthen self-confidence and professional performance of participants and is therefore seen as an important empowerment strategy. Project learning is normally staged in three steps. Supported by trainers individual participants or small teams are developing a product which is first presented to their peers and then to the wider audience of all DP partners. This procedure allows participants to practise and master stress management, skills in communication, team building and conflict management and results in more highly developed products. Once this internal process is completed, the women have to identify a "client" from outside (SMEs, training institutions or NGOs) and negotiate another project or product. This entails that participants must assess the client's intentions and needs before drawing up a proposal and eventually produce the outcome.

In the training programme on Knowledge Management for unemployed university graduates, for instance, participants are working individually or in small groups on a number of products such as:

- *A two-day workshop on knowledge management for DP member organisations, including an introduction into mind managing systems;*
- *A concept for "Yellow Pages" or competence maps (employees profiles and potentials), which are part of the intranet of a company or of a knowledge database);*
- *Interview guidelines; or*
- *The concept of a knowledge database that meets employees' needs.*

After a first training block, immigrant women participating in the sub-project "Training of trainers" are creating and implementing ICT-related learning concepts. They designed an Internet initiation course and taught it to the beneficiaries of other programmes offered by the DP to Eastern European women asylum seekers and to women returners.

In any case, the project staff seeks to sensitise participants to the need of reflecting their personal learning process and of making choices about what and how they wish to learn. Self-directed learning, e-learning and independent study are being introduced to suit the specific needs of the different target groups.

[Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft, DE-EA-31910](#)

Other DPs which are also not directly involving beneficiaries in the management and decision-making of the project are working with mentoring systems which are conceived as a major tool for empowerment. The JIVE DP in the UK is encouraging girls and women to train and develop career paths in male domains of the labour market such as technology, engineering, construction and surveying. JIVE's mentoring model seeks to empower beneficiaries to survive in a male work culture and - through helping each other - to become agents of change. Mentoring networks are being set up in the four regions where the DP operates.

The model is based on valuing women's traditional experience and knowledge as transferable to learning in new areas, and adopting a holistic approach involving the understanding of multiple factors impacting on women's lives and choices. The method enables the women with low levels of previous formal education to progression through vocational qualifications and into higher education.

The scheme is designed to accommodate the needs of schoolgirls and higher education students, trainees in the UK Modern Apprenticeship Programme and women in the early stages of a career in a male dominated occupation. The basic philosophy is to create a "learning partnership" formed by mentor and mentee. The Mentor is identified for her ability to be a role model to a less experienced woman. Rather than transferring her knowledge she is required to facilitate the learning process of the mentee by creating a conducive learning climate for her. Whilst being easily accepted and appreciated by women at academic level, the offer of mentoring met sometimes with reticence and doubts of very

young women. The DP's experience shows that they need extra encouragement to overcome concerns about "being underachievers", and therefore needing mentoring as a "crutch". For them the first step is the so-called "Pal Scheme", which matches for instance a new student with a "pal" e.g. a woman who has already completed at least one term at college, knows her way around and understands how the college operates.

JIVE has created the position of "super mentors", i.e. women who coordinate the regional networks forming its Mentoring Network and provide supervision to the mentors. The Network includes initiatives specifically designed and run by women from black and minority ethnic communities and also works with lone parents.

[JIVE, UKqb-35](#)

Enabling the empowerment of interlinked groups of beneficiaries is an extra challenge. A French example shows how it can be tackled. The final beneficiaries of the "Conciliation Famille Handicap" DP are parents of children with disabilities. To empower individually and as a group an interconnected process targeted at a whole range of actors has to be put in motion. This includes the children and dependent adults with disability whose quality of life will be improved by the DP's activities, but also the different categories of professionals whose task it is to support disabled people, who are being trained to provide better and more needs tailored care.

The first step was to study and analyse the very specific needs of both parents and children. 3000 families were solicited to participate in the enquiry and 700 questionnaires assessed. Ten exemplary life stories and 35 personal interviews allow to deepen the evaluation of the data collected. Speaking out and being encouraged as experts in their own right, clearly had an empowerment effect on both groups.

As a basic rule, the DP's activities mostly involve more than one of its three target groups. The families, for instance, are participating in the same training programmes as the professionals. Families and people with disabilities are sharing the benefits of transnational exchange and jointly take part in several international seminars, which are designed as one of the highlights of the DP's activities.

All tools and publications produced by the DP will be subject to "quality checks" performed by a group, which truly represents the beneficiaries.

[Conciliation Famille Handicap- FR-NAT-2001-10370](#)

4.1.3. Using research and evaluation to support empowerment

Before embarking on their multi-faceted empowerment activities DPs have studied and analysed the entire life situation of their final beneficiaries and identified the obstacles, which prevent social inclusion, access to employment and equal treatment on the labour market. In many cases this included not only data assessment and literature research, but also qualitative action research directly involving different groups of women and men in the quest of identifying causes and impact of (gender specific) discrimination.

Qualitative research is also used as a tool when training (highly qualified) women to set up support and social mediation systems tailored to the needs of disadvantaged groups threatened by exclusion.

The work is based on a participative action research methodology, which guarantees the inclusion of beneficiaries' points of view. The future Social Mediators are interviewing women and men who encounter difficulties to access or re-enter the labour market (these are mostly female since even in a mixed group, women are usually more marginalized and facing more problems). Interviewees are encouraged to talk about their needs, their wishes, their life strategies, their problems and their envisaged possible solutions. The DP ensures that they will not only obtain information on existing support and resources, but also that their concerns will be transmitted to the relevant economic, social and political players. At the same time, the approach stimulates the individual beneficiaries to get in touch with other

people living in similar conditions and to create informal networks, which will help them to develop mutual support.

[RED ADALBA, ES-187](#)

On-going self-evaluation ascertains that beneficiaries' views and needs are constantly assessed and fed back into project development. The experience of a German DP working with an "open curriculum" shows how the active participation of beneficiaries in the evaluation process can have a strong impact on organisational and curricular changes, which enhance empowerment.

At regular intervals the evaluators assess the satisfaction and proposals for improvement in relation to the different training programmes offered by the DP. This is how the participants of the „Intercultural Information Society" sub-project – 15 unemployed women immigrants from 12 non-EU countries, holding university degrees, - were able to call a special meeting, putting their demand of "more needs-tailored German tuition" on the agenda. The meeting assembled the participants, the project manager and the German teacher. Since German proficiency levels vary considerably within the group, the women asked for more pronounced individual support to compensate participants' different attainments and "starting positions". The project manager pointed out that the course budget was limited and left little leeway, and that stronger differentiation would only be possible if a cost-neutral solution could be found. After discussing possible solutions, the group decided that women with better language skills will increase their use of e-learning tools to further improve their German, thus enabling the teacher to be more flexible and to dedicate more time to women with less proficiency in German by offering individualised tuition.

[Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft, DE-EA-31910](#)

The Irish National Flexi-work Partnerships is also utilising research to give expression to the needs of the target groups. Following a review of previous research, qualitative approaches are being used to gain a deeper understanding of the issues of work life balance for each of the three major target groups of the project: working parents and carers in management and non-management positions; older people; and people with mental health difficulties. Yet, unlike in the previous example, in the Irish case the research is more oriented towards gaining input for policy messages, which should help – in the long run - to empower the target groups.

The research is being carried out in order to:

- *Ascertain the current conditions, needs and aspirations of the target groups in relation to work – life - balance and quality of life; and*
- *Optimally design and evaluate the innovative pilot programmes being executed during Action 2.*

The approach¹⁴ is initially taking the form of focus groups with members of the target groups. It is also based on the analysis of contributions by members of the Advisory Committees that represent the target groups.

¹⁴ Qualitative information is also gained through the pre-test phase of the pilot project evaluations (i.e., interviews with employees) as well as from the experience in developing the pilot projects in collaboration with employers. All of this qualitative information is equipping the DP to better design quantitative instruments to be used in three separate surveys of work-life balance on three different populations. The first is to be a nationwide representative survey of the adult Irish population which will examine the objective circumstances and subjective perceptions of all groups in the population (male and female, young and old, lower and higher socio-economic status, rural and urban) toward issues of work-life balance. This will tap people's existing situations and their aspirations for achieving optimal work-life balance. In addition to this nationwide study, there will be two specialised studies, based on stratified samples, focusing particularly on two of the three target groups: Older people and people suffering from mental health difficulties, as they would not be sufficiently represented in a nationwide representative sample. The three Advisory Committees, the Working Party of Employers and the DP are and will continue to make significant inputs to the design of this research, particularly in terms of the key issues to be examined. As noted above, evaluative research is also being carried out pre- and post- on each of the pilot projects.

The evaluation of the pilot projects demonstrates the focus on key-aspects of empowerment strategies targeted at the final beneficiaries, but also at the other players involved. For instance:

The pilot project “Flexibility for People with Mental Health Difficulties” aims at appropriate flexible working strategies that would make the workplace more accommodating for that target group. Other long-term outcomes to be hoped for are attitude change for human resources personnel, employers and co-workers, and ultimately producing change in the HR policy of the participating organisations.

The evaluation of the pilot project consists of interviews at the beginning – before the flexible working and support structures are put into place, - and at the end of the year’s duration of the project. These interviews are conducted with the individual employees, human resource personnel and employers/supervisors and designed to test whether:

- *The individual was able to work more effectively when using flexible working arrangements and the support structure than before;*
- *The individual found the flexible working arrangement and support structure to be beneficial;*
- *There were benefits to the employer/supervisor in terms of being able to work more effectively with the employee when using flexible working arrangements and the support structure than before;*
- *There has been any attitudinal change in human resources personnel, employers and union representatives towards flexible working for people with mental health difficulties, and towards having a permanent support structure in place for these individuals.*

A short follow-up interview is carried out at the end of Action 2, with human resource personnel to determine whether there has been a change in HR policy around employing people with mental health difficulties, and accommodating them through flexible working practices, as a result of the pilot project.

[National Flexi-Work Partnership, IE 19](#)

4.2. EMPOWERING DP PARTNERS

The more training and service providers, employers and public authorities, but also NGOs, learn and understand about the specific needs and interests of EQUAL target groups whilst integrating a gender dimension in their activities, the more they will be “empowered” to support final beneficiaries to develop their full potential, as both workers and citizens. The new competencies will enhance the professional profile and performance of both the organisations and their staff involved.

4.2.1. Multiplying equal achievements in partner organisations

Enabling active participation of all partners in the usually large EQUAL DPs is not an easy task. In the framework of their respective political cultures, training and labour market systems projects are developing a number of mechanisms to face that challenge.

In Greece a common work and decision-making structure was proposed by the National Support Structure and agreed by the Managing Authority and all DPs.

The proposal entailed the conversion of the DPs from informal bodies to non-profit organisations. (For this reason a specific law was passed for the establishment of these organisations). Each DP is administrated by a Board of Directors, in which each partner organisation is represented equally (one vote per partner). The Board of Directors is the body that approves the initial action plan, follows and controls the implementation of the project, decides on any necessary changes and thus ensures the proper performance of the project and the dissemination of its results. Any decisions involving fundamental changes have to be agreed unanimously by all the members of the Board. The model ascertains that all partners, regardless of their specific roles (involvement in certain actions, low budget etc), are informed of all developments and have the capacity to

influence the outcomes. Furthermore, their involvement in all proceedings and the co-operation between the partners strengthens the individual organisations, especially the smaller ones. Gaining in professional experience and competencies, they are able to closely monitor progress and ensure that actions and outcomes respond to their needs as organisation.

[Andromeda – GR-200955](#)

An Italian DP which is combining a variety of actions to improve the work-life-balance of parents aims to create a more gender sensitive environment by influencing both the policy and practice level in the participating local municipality. It is therefore working to “empower” the local authorities through enhancing gender competencies within the different parts of the administration.

One of the activities organised in the Municipality of Prato is focussing on the importance of gender competencies of civil servants and employees. To help decision-makers integrate the gender dimension into planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all actions – regardless of the policy field – the DP is setting up a Talent Bank taking stock of gender competencies within the administration. To this end all staff of the municipality is being interviewed. Prior to that, information seminars are organised in each single department to bring senior people on board and to encourage them to assist their collaborators to contribute.

The Talent Bank is taking shape as a Data Base, which will contain the CVs of the civil servants and employees. Besides highlighting existing gender competencies, this tool will make visible a variety of so far un-tapped human resources and thus yield added value for the municipality. For women civil servants and employees the Data Base is becoming a tool to further their career development, both horizontally and vertically, i.e. it may open access to positions at higher level, but also in different areas of municipal activity.

[PRATO, IT-G -TOS-010](#)

Most DPs try to value the differences of partners (organisational structure: institutions, associations; size, scope of action, location, thematic and methodological expertise, economic situation, etc.) and to make them fruitful for the empowerment of the DP as a whole and for everybody involved. The Spanish Red Adalba DP, which is made up of seven very different organisations implementing “Mass-Mediation” (social mediation in large numbers) in seven territories, is mainly relying on ICT to facilitate this process.

An egalitarian decision-making protocol (one territory, one vote) is part of the DP’s constitutional agreement. Red Adalba sees its ICT-based decision-making and networking as an empowerment tool, which is strengthening each territorial sub-project, and at the same enriching all partners through an on-going exchange of ideas, experiences and good practice. A common database has been created that is permanently being up-dated, thus allowing full and rapid access to information and all the outcomes generated by the partners.

Establishing the partnership has been an empowerment process in itself, because some of the organisations forming RED ALDABA would not have been able to participate in such a complex project without the support of other partners. On-going training and skills development of project managers in each participating organisation is a crucial component of the DP’s empowerment strategy. Steering Committee meetings are therefore always scheduled to coincide with training sessions for the project managers in each territory. A curriculum was agreed in the beginning and is being constantly adapted to new needs detected during the development of the activities. Those combined meetings are each time organized by a different DP member, which helps all partners to develop ownership of the project and its development process.

[RED ADALBA, ES-187](#)

The JIVE DP in the UK, aiming to break down occupational segregation, is bringing together the most gender segregated economic sectors in the country (technology, engineering, construction,

surveying) and bottom-up equality training organisations experienced in developing and promoting good gender equality practices.

The effects of working within the EQUAL project are empowering both categories of partners. Cooperation will raise the status of the small grass roots women's training centres and give credibility to their work with women, which is often undervalued by mainstream organisations. Whilst the NGOs are being offered staff development support, the other partners are benefiting from support to managing change within their own organisation and in-scope enterprises.

The DP coordination feels that a different kind of empowerment is necessary for some of the partners, representing employer's organisations and mainstream education/training institutions. Since the target audiences are mostly white male managers and decision-makers they require "disempowerment" to develop the capacity to listen to women's voices and experiences and to take their interests and needs into and up on the organisational agenda.

[JIVE, Ukqb-35](#)

For the "WomenIT" DP in Finland empowerment for all partners is closely linked to acquiring expertise in gender equality. The partnerships links kindergartens, primary schools, vocational and upper secondary schools, polytechnics and universities, but also employment offices, training and research organisations, enterprises and social partner organisations, the National Board of Education and the Ministry of Social and Health Care.

Given this broad variety of players, this is quite a challenge, but the DP perceives itself as a development project, willing and able to accompany partners on a journey towards improved gender equality performance and to permanently adapt its approach to emerging needs. A basic training course developed by the University of Oulu provides a solid base to all participants who - upon successful completion - can earn credits.

WomenIT is also supporting enterprises to plan and implement gender equality training for Human Resource Development staff. Since companies have to comply with Finnish equality legislation requiring companies with more than 30 employees to set up equality plans and to up-date them regularly, many employers have come to appreciate this support service. Increasingly the plans are becoming an important part of personnel policies and include issues like equal pay and transparency in remuneration, work-life-balance, recruitment practices and actions against sexual harassment. Given that the law will be tightened shortly, even more employers will have to seriously face the issue of gender equality and may benefit from the DP's achievements and tools

[WomenIT – FI-12](#)

4.2.2. Staff training and transnational exposure

Being directly involved in the implementation of EQUAL projects has empowerment effects on DP's personnel. Project managers, administrators, trainers and other support staff are acquiring new skills thanks to the development of innovative approaches in the framework of EQUAL. The transnational dimension of each DP enables widening of peoples' horizons, enhancing language and intercultural skills and knowledge about European affairs.

Empowering project teams in that way requires sophisticated planning and management, particularly in large multi-regional DPs, which are often organised in sub-projects. Sometimes the need for staff development emerged only after the launch of the various activities. The "Red Adalba" DP in Spain, for instance, realised during its early stages, that not only member organisations (being in charge of the implementation of regional sub-projects) should benefit from training, but also the technical staff of each of those Territorial Partnerships.

Project managers and technical staff felt that they had not enough time to keep properly informed about the development of key aspects of the DP. Therefore a common training programme focusing on social mediation and gender mainstreaming, information and

communication technologies, research techniques, methodologies, evaluation criteria and transnational work was agreed. It includes “refresher modules” and reflection days to deepen understanding and to enhance further development of those aspects. To save time and resources, each session of the Steering Committee is scheduled to coincide with the co-ordination meetings of the Territorial Partnerships, and thus the partners of the each territorial partnership can also benefit from this specific training.

Both training and reflection events are being taught and facilitated by professionals who are not involved in the DP. In addition, the virtual part of the post-graduate course (available on the internet - <http://equal.uji.es>) for future social mediators is open to the participants of this internal training

[RED ADALBA, ES-187](#)

4.2.3. Empowering external key players

Only few DPs are also explicitly embarking on an empowerment process of external key-actors. A French project which is working on work-life-balance sees empowerment training of local actors as an essential pre-condition to achieve this goal. This DP is convinced that services to improve the reconciliation of work and family life can no longer be financed exclusively by public institutions (the State or local governments) and that (local) firms must share those costs. Companies should come to understand that family support services help their staff to meet care responsibilities and, consequently, increase the productivity of the firm (less absenteeism and turn-over if workers have a fair quality of daily life).

This means that, in order to provide efficient services, both from a quality point of view and in terms of cost, the following steps must be taken:

- *All stakeholders in a given territory (city, district, etc.) must be mobilised, i.e. the local policy makers and decision-makers (elected officials, local civil servants, representatives of local firms, members of the civil society, etc.).*
- *Some of them – the operational “core group” - must be trained to “listen” to the needs of the citizens, to “understand” the specificities of the local rhythms of time, to be able to have a well informed vision of future needs and to draw up a business plan for the new services.*

For each empowerment training the DP identifies a team of 12 to 15 people – all of them concerned with “new services”. Usually the group includes the local elected official in charge of “care”, civil servants, and representatives of firms that are developing a sense of social responsibility, trade unions and relevant NGOs. So far three training sessions of two days each were developed and tested. They include three modules:

- *Building knowledge: how to identify and facilitate the emergence of unexpressed service needs in a territory;*
- *Organising participation: how to mobilise local actors around the issue of new service needs;*
- *Managing the project: how to master a business plan for services and how to evaluate the process.*

[*Coordination des temps de vie dans les territoires - FR-NAT-2001-1433*](#)

5. MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Compared to earlier Community Initiatives and European programmes the specific EQUAL approach of Development Partnerships incorporates a higher potential for dissemination and mainstreaming of good practice at both project and programme level. Random tests to check the composition of DPs, (undertaken in the framework of DP and TP analysis), revealed that the requirement of bringing relevant key actors into the composition of the partnerships has generally been met. The work of ETG 4 indicates that that the impressive lists of political decision-makers, authorities, companies, employers and unions and NGOs were not only a “paper exercise”

carried out when proposing the projects, but resulting in feasible and pro-active mainstreaming concepts. Strategies include networking, communication and decision-making systems amongst internal and external partners, visibility and media campaigns and the use of synergies with existing policy frameworks such as local or regional employment pacts.

Mainstreaming can be developed at horizontal and vertical level. Horizontal mainstreaming is defined as enabling the transfer and replication of good practice, i.e. approaches, methodologies and tools that work successfully, to other contexts or to the benefit of other target groups. Vertical Mainstreaming entails a structural approach intended to introduce change in existing systems, in the case of EQUAL in education, training and employment systems. This includes the social dialogue, which has a major role to play when it comes to adapting those systems to new developments and challenges.

Obviously, most DPs and TPs are aiming to actively promote and implement such processes both within and beyond their partnerships. Given the diversity of internal partners and external key players this is not always an easy task, and in most Member States the National Thematic Networks (NTNs) are geared towards supporting DPs in this endeavour.

Successful mainstreaming requires “a push- and a pull factor”, or in other words it is not enough that a DP or TP is working towards the dissemination and eventual inclusion of their achievements into the relevant policies and practices (push), there must also be a counterpart at the other end that is interested in the good practice and keen to make use of it (pull). The EQUAL partnership approach is clearly supporting the “pull factor” since the key actors involved are – over a reasonable time span and often through test runs – enabled to recognise the value of the emerging good practices and the advantages those could bring for their own organisation. It is much more difficult to activate external players to “pull” ; they may – in the first place – not always be aware of what an EQUAL project has to offer. Attractive presentations pointing out the added value for different categories of players are therefore paramount. Even if the first contact is promising, it is a crucial task for the DPs to keep the communication process going, which may lead external key players to gradually understand what and how they can win from an eventual cooperation.

5.1. MAXIMISING THE MAINSTREAMING POTENTIAL WITHIN THE DP

Most DPs have established rules and procedures to fully exploit the dissemination and mainstreaming potential that exists within their partnerships. The Spanish DELOA DP, for instance, which links a number of local communities in the region of Galicia, has clearly defined the conditions for participation in the project.

Those internal rules require partners:

- *To attend all meetings;*
- *To develop their own local actions;*
- *To finance part of the project;*
- *To propose future actions securing the impact and sustainability of EQUAL achievements;*
- *To participate in the dissemination process at all levels (political, social, media...).*

The DP is quite strict when it comes to complying with those rules. It even returned the financial contribution of one partner that, besides donating money, refrained from any other activity. This decision turned out to be a healthy shock, which resulted in a more active participation of this organisation, a private cultural foundation. Also, as a result of these internal rules, local politicians are emphasising the importance of DELOA's childcare and transport services for local development in their policy statements.

Other partners have already started follow-up activities. Fundación Paideia, the lead partner of the DP, is transferring the childcare model developed thanks to EQUAL in the rural areas around A Coruña to an urban context. The foundation is opening a childcare facility for kids between 4 and 12 years of age in the city centre. The new provision will offer services to parents working in the business incubator, which Paideia has set up at the outskirts of the city, but will also receive children from the neighbourhood.

In Germany DPs are required to work with two different categories of partners. Whilst the operational partners are carrying out the various activities and in many cases the so-called sub-projects, the strategic partners are supporting the projects through their involvement in consultative committees and through personal advice.

In its effort of disseminating good practice throughout the federal state of Lower Saxony, the “Frauen in t.i.m.e” DP has developed a strategy of regional mainstreaming, based on an intensive co-operation of its strategic and operational partners. The process is accompanied by systematic public relations work.

The DP works with a core group, which comprises eight operational partners. They include two local centres and the regional umbrella organisation of the largest provider of adult education in Germany, local and regional equality bodies, an NGO promoting gender equality in employment, the regional training institution of the United Service Workers Union and a professional organisation being active in the field of microelectronics. In addition, there are no less than eleven strategic partners in the Göttingen branch of the DP, assembling the local employment office, sector specific trade unions and the German Trade Union Federation, a cooperative, which is participating in a Learning Region project, the Coordination Centre for the promotion of gender equality in the private sector, two companies, the city government and the university of Göttingen. A similar network of strategic partners exists in the city of Verden, the second location of the DP.

It is not easy for the DP to involve the strategic partners beyond a rather formal participation. Temporary, well defined activities to be carried out jointly with changing operational partners proved to be most successful. For example, the official launch of the DP was organised in close co-operation with a company, which hosted the event on its premises. This enabled the DP to present its aims and activities to more than hundred invitees from the business world, the political arena and from education. A significant number of useful contacts in particular with business people and politicians could be established, mainly thanks to connections of the strategic partner.

Jointly with three other strategic partners (the Coordination Centre for the promotion of gender equality in the private sector, the local gender equality advisor and the Learning Region) the DP, organised the “FrauenBerufsMesse regia 20”, a fair promoting women’s employment and career opportunities. Thanks to the teamwork, 66 exhibitors and more than 800 visitors were attracted. Lots of contacts and an exchange amongst individual women, companies, employment offices, educational and guidance institutions and women’s networks were initiated, which later became crucial elements of the DP’s mainstreaming process.

Also, whenever Strategic Partners organise discussion forums, educational fairs, business conferences etc. the DP is invited to present its sub-projects and emerging results, which is opening up even more channels for dissemination and mainstreaming.

[Frauen in t.i.m.e. , DE-EA-14811](#)

5.2. LINKING UP WITH EXTERNAL KEY PLAYERS

Networking is probably the most common approach to initiate a mainstreaming process reaching beyond a DP. As a first step, DPs are collecting information on potentially useful contacts and networks of all their partners. The exercise is then followed by stimulating waves of dissemination targeted at key players in the territorial or sectoral environment of the projects. In order to create a self-sustaining process of dissemination, which may result in a critical mass of players adopting the good practice, it is important to coordinate and monitor the activities.

The strategy of the Greek Andromeda DP is an example of horizontal mainstreaming through an action plan that involves local and regional networks.

Half of the 22 DP members are located outside Athens in seven out of the 13 regions of Greece. The majority of the DP's activities (pilot equality plans, evaluation and support of women's employment centres, benchmarking equality performance in public and private sectors) are undertaken in all the regions involved. Methodologies and approaches are being adapted to regional/ local needs and differences.

The nature of the activities requires the active participation of key actors from outside the DP in each region. All partners are therefore activating their own networks and resources in order to achieve a dissemination and mainstreaming effect. In the region of Central Greece, for example, the main Andromeda partner, the ACME Centre for Vocational Training, is creating an "alliance for employment and equal opportunities". ACME, which is non-profit private organisation, is in a unique position to take that challenge. It has the Federation of Tourist Enterprises of Central Greece sitting on its Board, is acting as scientific advisor for employment and training policies to many municipalities and has long-standing working contacts with the Social Partner organisations in the region. In addition, since 2000 ACME is part of the national Andromeda Network, which links organisations working for the advancement of women's employment.

The alliance was launched with an event in December 2003, which was attended by almost all key actors of the region, including local authorities, Chambers of Commerce, training organisations, political parties, etc. Most of them expressed their willingness to be part of a local alliance for employment and equal opportunities. During 2004 this network in Central Greece is elaborating a protocol that will ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in all programmes, projects and actions to be implemented in the area during the next financing period (2005 – 2008). Similar efforts are in progress in the other regions where the DP is operating, namely Eastern and Central Macedonia, Thessaly and the islands of the South Aegean. All these activities are being evaluated, documented and disseminated in order to inform key players in other regions about strategies they could follow or combine when combating unemployment and gender inequalities.

[Andromeda – GR-200955](#)

An Italian DP joined an existing initiative, which is trying to promote positive actions in companies, and strengthened this endeavour through its EQUAL activities in companies.

SVIPO has signed an agreement promoted by the Province of Potenza, a sub-regional public body. The agreement is advocating positive actions as a crucial strategy for equal opportunities in daily working life. Before SVIPO became involved the agreement had been signed by all the employees and workers associations, trade unions and the regional Equal Opportunities Counsellor, but still lacked the support of employers. Through its gender equality seminars and mentoring scheme for companies the DP is in a good position to finally bring the employers on board of this initiative.

[SVIPO- IT-G-BAS-026](#)

In Spain the Managing Authority has emphasised from the beginning that good practices developed by territorial DPs should be transferable to other regions, areas or local communities that are not involved in EQUAL. Consequently the Barcelona based Tempora DP is setting up a dissemination strategy in two stages.

At the end of action 2 Tempora is organising a dissemination seminar, inviting policy makers at local and regional levels, including the Federation of Municipalities in Catalonia and the Generalitat of Catalonia (regional government) as well as the business community, represented through, for instance, the Chambers of Commerce. In the framework of Action 3, the DP is running different workshops with the participation of these new players in order to disseminate and transfer its good practice and results. The first contacts appear to be quite promising. Policy makers, in particular, are interested to learn about Tempora's EQUAL achievements and in getting involved in similar activities. It is important to note that this is also the case for the Generalitat of

Catalonia, which is besides its Madrid counterpart, was the only regional Government that had opted not to play a role in the EQUAL Initiative as a full member of a DP.

[TEMPORA, ES-437](#)

Mainstreaming of good practice is often more effective if the messages targeted at organisations or companies are carried by peers rather than by a project advocating the needs and interests of the EQUAL target groups. Employers, for instance, tend to be more open and willing to embrace gender equality or diversity, if other employers vouch for the validity of a given approach. The Greek DP mentioned above, aimed to make equality plans in companies a regular routine throughout the country, is successfully using that strategy. Producing a guide for employers is part of the approach. The guide is based on practical knowledge and experience of employers with equality plans and provides advice on how they ought to be implemented (detection of possible inequalities, planning of interventions, communicating the equality plan to the environment of the firm, both internally and externally).

To be accepted and used by employers, the guide must not only propose methodologies and tools that were tested and approved as useful by companies, but also be adaptable to specific sectoral or local needs. This is why Andromeda choose to work with a two-pronged approach.

- *It convinced three private companies (medium sized and large) to become members of the partnership and to commit themselves to designing and implementing equality plans.*
- *At the same time the DP convinced 22 small and medium sized companies in various regions of the country to cooperate with external advisors for drawing up positive action plans.*

The first approach enables the companies to launch a process that is reviewing every aspect of their operations (recruitment, on the job training, promotion, wage policies, product development, etc.) with the aim to evaluate them from a gender perspective. The new equality plan is then drawn up to create change and to ensure that the policies are either integrating a gender dimension or – in the case of huge gender gaps - involve positive action for the under-represented sex. The active participation of the companies is crucial for a number of reasons:

- *It is strengthening the effectiveness of actions undertaken by a top-down decision, binding key people at all levels of the enterprise;*
- *It allows to test the chosen methodology and tools in the daily reality of enterprises operating in three different sectors (mass media, banking and public transport);*
- *It enhances the sustainability of results at the level of company operations after the end of this first action plan;*
- *It is multiplying the results of the equality plans achieved at company level and their impact on equal opportunities in general, since the selected enterprises have a very high profile. They are in contact with thousands of people every day and can act as opinion leaders and models in their areas of business.*

In the framework of the second approach, the external “equality advisers”, who were before trained by the DP, are working each with two companies. Their task is to help employers introduce or reinforce equal opportunities policies. This enables the DP to test of number of methodologies (communicating equality to firms, coaching-mentoring, management development) which are relevant to producing the Guide. Moreover, the work of the DP with these regional companies is creating alliances with the local business communities, thus multiplying the achievements of the project.

[Andromeda – GR-200955](#)

The Irish National Flexi -Work Partnership is using a similar route.

The DP is exploiting the networks of members of its Working Party of Employers, e.g. their professional and work based connections. It is, for instance, running a series of seminars and conferences to facilitate the transfer of best practices from large organisations to small ones. This is particularly relevant in the area of flexibility, where access to flexible working arrangements are not seen as a viable option for SMEs; nor

for production line workers. In addition to seminars and conferences, transfer of information about best practice takes place between these companies at the meetings of the Working Party of Employers.

The importance of engaging people with the power to effect changes is seen as most crucial. Together with members of its Working Party of Employers the DP is holding breakfast meetings for CEOs of major companies in order to reach out and influence relevant opinion makers.

[National Flexi-Work-Partnership, IE-19](#)

Disseminating good practice to key players is sometimes also a question of packaging. Practices with an equal opportunities label on them may often not figure amongst the main interests of employers or senior managers in the economic sectors targeted by the projects. Identifying trends and themes that are high on the agenda of enterprises or key people and suggesting synergies with equal opportunities policies can be a successful strategy.

Engineers did not seem to be very interested in meetings about reconciliation and gender equality. But they were very keen to learn about occupational stress. Therefore the Danish “Get A Life, Engineer !” DP decided to link the two issues and to “highjack” the agenda of meetings focusing on stress management. Using the results of recent research that revealed the imbalance between working life and family life as a major stress factor amongst engineers in Denmark, DP representatives explained the necessity of looking into gender equality aspects when seriously addressing occupational stress and work satisfaction.

[Get A Life, Engineer, DK-12](#)

Whilst emphasising the key importance of tapping into formal networks, many Pillar 4 DPs make it a point to also use the informal networks and personal contacts of their members. It is well known how men benefit from their “old boys networks” to further their careers or to influence developments in companies and organisations. Some DPs feel that women need to learn from this experience and should not shy away from exploiting personal contacts.

Sitting next to a managing director at a private party may be a good opportunity to discuss equal opportunities. A Danish DP found that this was not only helpful to raise the awareness of the boss of an engineering consulting firm, but also to promote the project. The dinner conversation resulted in the company accepting to become involved in one of the research projects of the DP, a case study about work place culture and work-life-balance with a special emphasis on gender strategies.

[Get A Life, Engineer, DK-12](#)

In the case of the Spanish “Red Adalba” DP accepting a Human Resources manager as an “unusual” participant in the project’s training programme led to a useful new connection.

Thanks to a personal contact a woman professional working in the Human Resources department of El Corte Inglés, a big commercial company, got interested in and was admitted to the online course of the “Mass-Mediación” project whose target group are unemployed university graduates. Being employed she could not participate in the compulsory work experience placements, which are part of the training, and so, she did not earn the Master Degree at the end of the programme. But she received an official certificate from the University. The “unusual” participant was highly satisfied with the training and affirmed that it broadened her professional perspectives and skills.

The contact proved to be valuable for the DP, which was keen to involve El Corte Inglés in its research activities. This big commercial company has a reputation of being more than reticent to using external consultants or services. Thanks to the contact with the “unusual” participant the company is now agreeable to the DP carrying out a study to analyse employees’ career expectations and needs in terms of more work satisfaction. The study will also explore the possibility of implementing gender mainstreaming, and depending on the results, the DP may be providing the preparatory training to middle management.

Communication and cooperation with external key players can be enhanced through increased and permanent visibility in the media. This is not only raising the awareness of the public-at-large for the crucial issues of EQUAL. Reading about progress and achievements of a DP or TP in the press or taking account of its appearance in a television programme can also reinforce the commitment of decision-makers. They may feel that their commitment to support the dissemination of EQUAL good practice is mirrored in the current public debate. This is particularly true for political decision makers who always keep a watchful eye on the public-at-large and on potential voters.

To ensure both influence on the public debate and impact on policy development, the Austrian DP “F&Mpower” decided to seek professional PR support right from the beginning. A young and dynamic public relations company was chosen as one of the fifteen partner organisations forming the DP. This entailed that the agency was involved in the whole process of building the network of partners, designing the various activities and jointly implementing them in several locations of the region of Vorarlberg. The usual problems arising when publicly funded projects seek to cooperate with external PR agencies could thus be reduced to a minimum.

While the operative partners were setting up their working structures and launching their activities, the agency was concentrating on the development of a common corporate identity, the website and the kick-off-event. As a result, the DP was able to go public from early on without having to worry about the legal or financial details of buying in PR services.

A large regionwide visibility campaign focusing on the articulation of working and family live accompanied all the activities of the DP. F&Mpower sought to draw attention to the advantages of more equal work-life-balance solutions for both women and men, but also for companies. The slogan “New energy with added-value”, illustrated by a logo showing a battery striking a flash in the form of Vorarlberg, appeared on large posters in strategically chosen areas throughout the region. In parallel, the DP’s brochure was widely disseminated, and advertisements were published in newspapers and magazines. Existing media contacts of the DP’s strategic partners such as the Austrian Employers’ Federation, Trade Unions, the Regional Employment Office and the Chamber of Commerce were successfully used to raise the interest of journalists to cover both national and transnational activities of the DP.

The agency is also in charge of designing and producing all F&Mpower publications, including the [catalogue of the project’s mobile exhibition](#). It is collecting and permanently up-dating facts and figures of the progress of the DP and ensuring that this information is carefully prepared as input for the monthly newsletter, for media packs and press conferences.

Instead of the usual big final conference the agency suggested a whole series of EQUAL final conferences in many different places and other attention catchers such light shows on buildings carrying short messages related reconciliation.

[F&Mpower; AT 5-1306](#)

For the Italian “Gender Competencies” DP, which succeeded to influence collective bargaining, addressing the media is serving a two-fold purpose:

A press conference was held to inform the local public about the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the social partners. It is committing employers and unions to negotiate work-life-balance measures for women and men as part of a new collective agreement and to include EQUAL achievements related to family-friendly flexible work organisation and care services into an existing one. The media coverage is intended to emphasise the potential benefits of those agreements for the citizens, which may result into both the media and the public attentively observing the process and thus adding to the pressure for the successful completion of negotiations.

[IT- G- BOL- 001 Gender Competency](#)

A Swedish DP, which is working for equal treatment of gay and bisexual in the care sector, is linking research of attitudinal patterns of both this specific group of carers and their work environment to an awareness raising and training programme in municipalities. It is seeking on-going media coverage and publicity to influence political decision-makers and the public at large.

Results of studies and research are the basis for articles and reports about sexual orientation in working life. To raise the awareness on a systemic and political level, the DP aimed right for the top and succeeded to meet with the Swedish Minister for Working Life. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the Minister of the activities in the project and also to request more resources from the government to the Swedish Work Environment Authority, in order to put sexual orientation on the agenda of this institution.

[Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System, SE-33](#)

5.3. STIMULATING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Bringing about systemic change or vertical mainstreaming is difficult to achieve in the lifetime of a DP or TP. This is particularly true if new legislation and/or the introduction of new regulations are required to integrate good practices in training and employment systems. The experience of earlier Community Initiatives such as ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT has shown that when such changes occurred, their foundations were most often laid long before the beginning of those programmes. Project promoters that succeeded to mainstream good practice had often been working persistently over many years to design, test, implement and multiply a specific approach or concept. Operating an ADAPT or EMPLOYMENT project had eventually provided a favourable framework and increased visibility to enable the final steps of the mainstreaming process at the right moment in time. Good practices providing solutions to challenges that are high on the policy agenda stand a better chance to generate systemic change than those developed in a “niche” outside of the current spotlight.

EQUAL may well have provided a similar positive framework for DPs that are committed to gender equality. Both the work of ETG 4 and the collection of emerging good practices by Member States confirm that there is a substantial body of evidence indicating that many EQUAL achievements are building on earlier experiences. Together the old and new concepts have the potential to tackle most if not all of the persistent obstacles to equal treatment of women and men on the labour market. Clearly, the problem of gender gaps and inequalities is not rooted in a lack of models for good practices, but in the absence of serious mainstreaming.

The “JIVE” DP in the UK is an example indicating that good practice accumulated and improved over many years can eventually break through to mainstreaming its achievements. Based on the results of “Let’s Twist”, its earlier EMPLOYMENT-NOW project which focused on training of trainers to enhance women’s access to science and technology, JIVE developed a network of regional “desegregation hubs” to enhance female career opportunities in male domains of the labour market such as science, engineering and technology. Coordinated by Bradford College where thanks to NOW the Let’s Twist initiative has become a permanent unit for equal opportunities, the EQUAL DP is closely working with employers organisations and supporting companies to establish a more diverse workforce.

Building on its achievements and expertise JIVE Partners bid successfully for a government contract to host and run a National Resource Centre for Women’s Training in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET). Competitors included a heavy weight consortium linking the Royal Society for Science, the National Institute of Physics and a national level skills council, but also a number of universities.

The new centre will be an important component of the UK Government’s strategy to increase the number of women in science and engineering. The concept is linking equal opportunities policies to forward looking strategies enabling the country to face the challenge of the demographic changes and to tackle emerging skills gaps. The remit of the centre is to improve the participation and position of all women in SET employment across academia, industry and public service in the UK, including those from ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, caring responsibilities and those disadvantaged in accessing the labour market. This will be achieved by providing a focus base for advice

and support to the SET community, and developing and sharing good practice to employers seeking to support, recruit, retain and promote women and to bring about lasting change for women in employment and education. The provision will be accessible to all parties across the UK, including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and work closely with existing interest groups and key stakeholders.

[JIVE, Ukgb-35](#)

There are a number of EQUAL DPs with very promising mainstreaming strategies, which have developed good practices addressing policy priorities that are high on the local or regional policy agenda. The Spanish “Deloa” DP’s solutions to transport needs in a rural area is one of them.

With relatively modest resources – three minibuses with nine seats each – Deloa was able to tackle the lack of transport in rural areas, which is one of the most important barriers to people’s participation in training and/or access to employment. The services established by the EQUAL DP enabled the transport of its training participants and their children who are benefiting from the DP’s new childcare facilities. At the end of the project, the big challenge is to make those services sustainable and to even extend them other parts of the region.

Persistent awareness raising and lobbying of the regional administration and in particular the General Transport Management of the Xunta de Galicia, eventually opened the door for more pilot schemes, involving small transport businesses. They are using a model of "renting vans with a driver" to rural municipalities that are seeking to increase the mobility of their citizens. To date this model could not be used by municipalities with less than 85.000 inhabitants. As a result of the lobbying and thanks to the coordinating role of the General Transport Management, a Decree is now underway, that will eventually allow for more experiments with needs-tailored, flexible rural transport systems in the area.

[DELOA – ES-188](#)

Creating win-win situations that further mainstreaming of EQUAL achievements whilst helping key players who are committed to actual or emerging policy priorities can greatly enhance the mainstreaming process. EQUAL DPs and TPs ensure that their good practices are being brought to the attention of relevant public bodies and/or government departments and agencies. Sometimes this leads to “pull-effects”, since the key players concerned are genuinely interested in relevant good practice. The experience of the Irish National Flexi-Work-Partnership shows how the approach is working in both a national and a European perspective.

The DP is contributing to the Forum on the Workplace of the Future organised by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. The Centre was established by the Government to support employers and employees in the private and public sectors. It recognises the importance of workplace innovation and competitiveness in securing Ireland’s future economic and social success. The project is contributing particularly to two aspects of EQUAL’s submission to this Forum:

- *the workplace implications of the changing occupational profile of the workforce; and*
- *the increased participation of women.*

This includes policy messages related to emerging good practices from both the DP and its Working Party of Employers. Regarding the workplace implications of the increased participation of women, flexible working options that help retain women in the work force and support parents and carers are relevant examples. It was emphasised that this must involve facilitating work-life balance for all, and not only women.

Furthermore, the importance of childcare provision and family support is increasingly being recognised by the Working Party of Employers. Innovative support for carers and parents also involve education and awareness training, referral services and on-site support groups. A programme being implemented by one of the employers in the Work-Life-Balance Project is that of emergency childcare, whereby companies purchase several childcare places that parents can use if their usual childcare arrangements break down. This company is also currently involved in establishing a website to support workers with care responsibilities within their organisation.

Good practice regarding older workers such as addressing pension issues, increasing flexibility and tackling discrimination in the work place was also highlighted. Bringing together employers and employees to address such issues and to facilitate the empowerment of older workers and people with mental health difficulties and enable open communication was seen as one of the most useful strategies.

Also, members of the DP such as the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) are members of the Social Partnership, which collaborates with Government in formulating both economic and social policy. As such they have direct input into the formulation of these policies and through this the Project will link EQUAL Pillar 4 activities to the new European Employment Strategy.

[National Flexi-Work-Partnership, IE-19](#)

The Italian “SVIPO” DP succeeded to influence the drafting new regional legislation and to open doors for importing a gender equality award system as an asset to the Italian equal opportunities policies.

Establishing and maintaining contact with political decision-makers of its territory, helped the DP to develop a permanent working relationship with the Vice-President of the Basilicata Region. She has proposed new regional legislation on the flexibility of city times and welcomed the input from SVIPO, which is based on its achievements in harmonising working time, family time, leisure time etc. as an important component of the law.

Furthermore, she is actively supporting SVIPO to “import” the Optima certification from Spain at local and national level, promoting its adoption by regional and national governments.

[SVIPO- IT-G-BAS-026](#)

Influencing collective bargaining as a crucial mechanism for enhancing gender equality in the world of work is part of the mainstreaming activities of a number of DPs. One of their strategies is to offer training to key people of the social partner organisations. The “Tempora” DP based in Barcelona and led by the Catalonian Trade Union for General Workers is channelling good practices related to reconciliation into collective agreements. Building on research and results of a large variety of pilot programmes including new flexible work organisation in companies, child and elderly care, plus other family support services, the project has accumulated a large body of evidence on how those programmes can benefit both employees and employers. Transferring the achievements into formal collective agreements is a major step towards lasting impact and sustainability.

The project realised that this kind of transfer is not possible without increasing the knowledge of the Trade Union Representatives on equal opportunities in general, and - even more important – on the different strategies for work-life-balance and the advantages to be gained by employees, both women and men. Tempora offers a training programme to 20 trade unionists, organised as a 60-hours - partly on-line, partly attended - course. A similar course is provided to employers and HR managers, but with a focus on the advantages of reconciliation-friendly policies for companies. Through this dual strategy the DP expects to enhance the cooperation amongst employers and unions and to push for future work-life-balance programmes in companies, which will certainly require the unions’ support.

Clearly, the approach is yielding positive results. The collective agreement with Vodafon, for instance, is – compared to the existing legislation - providing employees with improved conditions. It guarantees maternity leave of 15 days before delivery and an extended period of working time reduction for maternity related reasons, plus extended paid nursing breaks. In addition, the agreement grants up to one year of leave to employees caring for dependent family members. This leave can be further extended if employees have care responsibilities for children younger than four years of age.

Other examples successfully negotiated also go beyond the existing legal obligations. They include the reduction of the full time 40-hours–working-week to 35 hours in the agreement with Television de Catalunya and extended leave for reasons of maternity, adoption and family events (wedding, family members' wedding, bereavement) introduced into the collective agreement for the Family Workers of Catalonia.

[TEMPORA, ES-437](#)

An Italian DP, which sees the rigidity of working times and care provision as the major problems of the more general dilemma of reconciliation, is also working towards a collective agreement. The project stimulated and accompanied the negotiation process throughout its lifespan and can have achieved an important step in the mainstreaming process.

In November 2003 the Trade Union Confederation and the Employers Association (Trade Sector) signed a Memorandum of Understanding that binds the social partners in two different ways:

- *Through the provision of concrete measures intended to facilitate balanced participation of women and men in family and working life, the Memorandum is introducing a specific item concerning work and life balance into collective bargaining;*
- *The results of the Equal project's experimentation (on work organisation and redesign of existing care services) are included into the renewal of the relevant existing collective agreement.*

The Memorandum of Understanding is fully in line with European level policies, namely the Resolution of the Council of the 29 June 2000¹⁵ concerning the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life.

At the same time, the DP is carrying out a feasibility study on the eventual implementation of a "Reconciliation Desk" and its sustainability as a public service, to be managed by Local Authorities. To mainstream its good practices the DP has directly involved the Municipality of Bolzano and the care departments of neighbouring Local Communities.

[IT- G- BOL- 001 Gender Competency](#)

¹⁵ EC Communication n. 218/2000, which mentions provisions such as "encouraging businesses to introduce management practices which take account of their worker's family life; and "social partners to endeavour to find solutions which encourage balanced participation of men and women in working life".