

**MODERNISING AND STRENGTHENING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES  
GOOD PRACTICE AND STRATEGIC LESSONS FROM EQUAL**

WORKING DOCUMENT

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## MODERNISING AND STRENGTHENING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

### GOOD PRACTICE AND STRATEGIC LESSONS FROM EQUAL

*This document has been prepared as part of a series of papers on **Strategic Lessons from the Employability Strand of EQUAL**. The main purpose of these papers is to underpin and help to focus transnational cooperation within the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF), as a means of promoting EQUAL principles and of mainstreaming EQUAL approaches that can be directly related to the new ESF priorities for action.*

*These Strategic Lessons seek to highlight, from a European perspective, what has already been achieved by EQUAL in relation to the new ESF thematic priorities and to demonstrate those EQUAL approaches that have a potential for wider transfer within the Union. They could thus be helpful to those who are running, or are planning to set up, transnational networks in one of the thematic priority fields of the ESF.*

*This document summarises outcomes from those EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs), which provide examples of good practice that can inform initiatives aimed at modernising and strengthening employment services for disadvantaged people. It also includes annotated references to the EU policy context and relevant background material which can be accessed on-line through hyperlinks.<sup>1</sup>*

## BACKGROUND

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### Higher demands on the delivery of effective employment services

The context in which Employment Services are operating is characterised by drastic and rapid changes in the overall economic climate and in the skills and competences that are required by the labour market, the accelerating ageing of the European population and the need to address the effects of increasing migration in a constructive way. All of these factors impact on the dynamics of the labour market and place Employment Services (ES) under considerable and continuing pressure.

The pace of structural change in the economy is prompting companies to adapt their work processes rapidly and it is also generating continuous modifications in the content of jobs and fostering new forms of employment. The distinction between dependent employment and self employment is becoming blurred, career interruptions are more frequent and pathways to (re)-entry into employment have become more complex and treacherous for disadvantaged people. As a result, both job seekers and employers place increasingly higher demands on the delivery of effective employment services. Customers expect services not only to provide accurate information on the supply and demand of labour and to anticipate the needs of labour markets, but also to act as advisors for employers in overcoming bottlenecks in recruitment and to be able to offer jobseekers a range of personalised services including assistance with the design of tailor-made action plans based on a diagnosis of individual needs, skills and competencies.

Creative use of the internet and other media provides new opportunities to develop personalised services which job-seekers and companies demand and to enhance support for by facilitating access to information for everybody.

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<sup>1</sup> Text elements that include hyperlinks are underlined. For off-line use, a complete dossier including all relevant reference material can be downloaded from:  
[http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/empl/equal\\_etg/library?l=/etg1/01\\_documents/modemplservicedoc/ EN 1 .0 &a=d](http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/empl/equal_etg/library?l=/etg1/01_documents/modemplservicedoc/ EN 1 .0 &a=d)

In response to these pressures and challenges, the services landscape is also changing. In addition to the Public Employment Services (PES), private service providers, voluntary organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are increasingly acting as employment intermediaries, some of which are contracted by, or cooperate with, the PES while others operate as competitors.

## **Employment Services contribute to implementing the European Employment Strategy**

Against this background, Employment Services, especially the PES, also play a key role in delivering active labour market policies and in implementing the [Guidelines](#) (GLs 2008-2010) of the [European Employment Strategy](#) (EES). One of the ambitious targets agreed in the context of the EES is ensuring that *“every unemployed person is offered a job, apprenticeship, additional training or other employability measure; in the case of young persons who have left school within no more than 4 months by 2010 and in the case of adults within no more than 12 months.”* These new starts should be a real first step towards effective reintegration into the labour market and possible prevention of long-term unemployment and social exclusion. Public Employment Services have a crucial function in developing service models that can help to meet this target.

Several Guidelines set out specific priorities that require major contributions to be made by the PES, in particular:

- To help ensure inclusive labour markets through *“active and preventive labour market measures including early identification of needs, job search assistance, and training as part of personalised action plans, provision of necessary social services to support the inclusion of those furthest away from the labour market and contribute to the eradication of poverty”* (GL 19);
- To improve matching of labour market needs through *“the modernisation and strengthening of labour market institutions, notably employment services, (...) better anticipation of skills needs, labour market shortages and bottlenecks”* (GL 20).

In most Member States, the process of modernising the PES is ongoing, although the aims and priorities related to this process vary considerably between the different countries. In some Member States, the focus is on a better integration of active and passive labour market policies, whilst in others the reform process is mainly driven by the need to ensure more efficient coordination between the regional offices and the central level. In a significant number of cases, a particular emphasis is also placed on enhancing the capacities of the PES to offer training for disadvantaged groups, including older workers, immigrants, migrants and the low-skilled.<sup>2</sup>

At the European level, action to help employment services to adapt to new needs has gained momentum in recent years.

National PESs and the Commission have been working in close co-operation since 1997 in a [European Network of Public Employment Services](#).<sup>3</sup> The aim of this network is to improve the delivery of employment services and the contribution of PES to the integration of the European labour market and the implementation of the European Employment Strategy. The latest [Mission Statement](#) of the Network, adopted in December 2006, explicitly refers to the modernisation of the PES with a focus on:

- Strategies to customise services;
- The early identification of needs and early intervention;
- More effective service delivery based on the use of IT and self-service facilities for job search;
- The development of partnerships and networking involving cooperation with other organisations and private agencies;

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<sup>2</sup> See [Joint Employment Report 2008/2009](#).

<sup>3</sup> In addition to EU Member States the network also involves the PES from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein (EEA)

- Ensuring quality of service through evaluation based on performance indicators, staff development including ongoing review of skills and competencies;
- The transfer of learning through transnational collaboration.

In the framework of the EU Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity ([PROGRESS](#), 2007-2013) the Commission launches each year a restricted call for proposals on 'Innovative projects related to Employment Services.' Projects receiving a grant under this call should further support the modernisation of PES. The Public Employment Services from countries involved in the Network are eligible applicants.

## **The ESF supports the Modernisation of Employment Services**

This European momentum is also strongly reflected in the priorities for intervention of the [European Social Fund](#) during the period 2007 to 2013.<sup>4</sup> The ESF promotes a broad spectrum of actions related to developing and enhancing the capacity of structures that are directly linked to the provision of employment, education and training and social inclusion services. Article 3 (on the 'Scope of assistance') of the ESF Regulation<sup>5</sup> explicitly states, under the priority "*enhancing access to employment of job seekers and inactive people*," that the ESF shall support the modernisation and strengthening of labour market institutions, in particular employment services.

A substantial number of ESF Operational Programmes, both national and regional, provide details about planned activities that are directly related to this issue. Examples include action aimed at:

- Training of staff in institutions operating on the labour market at national, regional and local level, in order to strengthen the efficiency of employment services and their capacity in delivering reforms;
- Developing comprehensive territorial approaches to the delivery of integrated services including 'One-Stop-Shops', and fostering cooperation and partnership between public bodies, private organisations and NGOs in this field;
- Improving labour market analyses and forecasts on workforce supply and demand, developing better information and communication systems at national level, assessing working conditions and controlling compliance with existing legislation;
- Enabling the clients and staff of services to make better and more effective use of new technologies, by providing e-services and easy access to self-service/internet portals;
- Fostering individualised approaches to labour market (re)-integration through more personalised services and the design of integration pathways.

Several national and regional OPs highlight their clear intentions to continue to enhance strategies already launched under EQUAL in some of these fields of action, including the use of transnational exchange and cooperation and the transfer and dissemination of good practice.

A preliminary analysis of a sample of OPs from 18 Member States (including 18 national and 16 regional OPs) indicates that the issue of "*modernisation and strengthening of labour market institutions, in particular employment services*" is a priority in two thirds of these Member States. Though this sample is not representative of the total number of OPs, the results of the analysis illustrate that there is a critical mass of planned action in current OPs that can draw on the Strategic Lessons from EQUAL.

## **CREATING AN INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKET - A CHALLENGE FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN THE EU**

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Public Employment Services are one of the most important sources of assistance for those people who experience the greatest difficulties in finding a job. They have a crucial role to play in a context in which other actors such as private agencies tend to focus their services on those

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<sup>4</sup> See [Public administrations and services in the European Social Fund 2007-2013](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Regulation \(EC\) No 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#) of 5 July 2006

jobseekers that are easier to place. Within the framework of the EQUAL ESF Community Initiative, several hundred Development Partnerships set out to pilot new approaches to ensuring a more inclusive labour market for disadvantaged groups. Their outcomes provide a critical mass of experience to inform new action by employment services in this field and many of their measures and methods can be replicated more widely.

Lessons from EQUAL that can be used to strengthen Employment Services are centred on two main thematic priorities. The first is to combat discrimination, especially against ethnic minorities, and to promote diversity in the labour market, whilst the second relates to further developing, and making more effective use of, integration pathways that guide disadvantaged people towards employment.<sup>6</sup>

Immigrants and members of ethnic minorities continue to encounter persistent inequalities on the labour market. They are at a much higher risk of unemployment than EU-nationals, are significantly over-represented in the least desirable jobs and face particular disadvantages in acquiring and updating professional skills and qualifications. Thus, they require special attention and special efforts if their vocational (re)-integration is to be achieved successfully.

Integration pathways provide a low threshold entry point to a multi-stage process linking and matching the needs and interests of vulnerable people to different, hitherto separate services and offering individualised support. Pathways draw on the whole range of resources that can be mobilised in a local context to deliver information, guidance and counselling on vocational training opportunities and work placements, and to ensure professional assistance with job search. Employment Services can play a pivotal role in this integration chain and make a vital contribution within a structured partnership process. Pathway approaches follow a rationale that is closely related to new practices of **individual case management** which are increasingly replacing previous service models in the PES and form a central component of their strategy to combat and prevent long-term unemployment.

Both these thematic priorities, combating discrimination and individualising support of vulnerable groups, are reflected in ESF OPs. Examples include:

**Belgium** – *The Federal OP indicates that specific activities are planned to make organisations operating in the labour market more aware of the benefits of diversity, to foster networking and exchange good practice of non-discrimination between the relevant actors, and to recruit and train new local employment intermediaries with personal experience of living in precarious situations such as poverty, who shall help to improve the practices of public services so that these can be more easily accessed by vulnerable groups;*

**France** – *The National OP stresses the need to intensify personalised support and follow-up of jobseekers who are facing particular difficulties in (re)-entering employment. It promotes the further development of integration pathways that are designed to identify individual risks of long-term unemployment at an early stage and that combine a range of differentiated support measures tailored to individual needs;*

**Greece** – *One of the priority axes of the HRD OP is mainly focused on counteracting social exclusion and enhancing social cohesion. It supports the development of policies to strengthen vulnerable population groups, targeted actions for social and employment inclusion, and measures to combat stereotyped attitudes and behaviour patterns in the working and social environment;*

**Italy** – *OPs at national and regional level emphasise the need to move towards a more personalised approach of job seekers and employers. In this context, they attach particular importance to action to continue and enhance strategies already launched under EQUAL and ESF 2000-2006.*

**Romania** – *The HRD OP sees improving the capacity of PES to offer tailored services, as a key element in modernising employment services. The OP supports specific action to increase the level of social and vocational competences of PES staff in order to design and implement individual action plans for, and together with, jobseekers. The PES shall develop a proactive attitude towards the jobseekers and provide truly personalised services that include an analysis*

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<sup>6</sup> See also EQUAL Strategic Lessons on [Increasing the Participation of Migrants in Employment and Pathways to Integration and \(Re-Entry\) into Employment for Disadvantaged People](#)

*of the jobseeker's profile, the identification of obstacles to their (re)-integration, the development of a personalised action plan and support even after the signature of a job contract.*

These two priorities constitute a growing concern for the PES, especially where the creaming off of 'easier to place' unemployed people by private agencies increases the pressure on public services to cater for the problems of those who face particular difficulties.

Good practice from EQUAL related to fighting discrimination in the labour market<sup>7</sup> and promoting pathways to (re)-integration can help to sharpen the focus of employment services on the needs of disadvantaged groups. Employment intermediaries, in particular the PES, can play a vital role in ensuring equal access to work for all and also compliance with the law. In reality, however, few services are ready to admit that certain institutional practices can also perpetuate, rather than provide effective safeguards against, discrimination in the labour market. As regards individual integration pathways, the most important challenge in implementing this type of action lies in coordinating and networking all the relevant agencies and thereby providing a coherent and transparent range of accessible services. Many statutory labour market institutions still have little experience of cooperative working with actors outside their own organisational framework. The failure to meet this challenge is perhaps one of the main reasons why there are still relatively few examples of comprehensive pathway strategies being adopted in the delivery of active employment policies at local level.

Two particular fields of action can be identified in which EQUAL offers examples of good practice that have proved to be effective in tackling these issues:

- Fostering anti-discrimination skills and a intercultural competence within employment services;
- Developing cooperation and building new partnerships.

The considerable resources allocated to the ESF to support employment and inclusion policies in the EU should be used to apply the lessons from EQUAL well beyond the experimental framework of this Community Initiative. Transnational cooperation can speed up this process by providing structured opportunities for mutual learning involving those who are responsible for the implementation of ESF operational programmes and other strategic stakeholders. Building and capitalising on validated good practice from EQUAL will help to close or reduce the existing gaps in the provision of employment services that respond to the needs of those who are furthest from the labour market.

New ESF initiatives to make employment services more responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups underpin other measures by Member States which are in line with the objectives of the European Union related to [Active Inclusion](#) and the [Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups](#). They also provide strong support for the EU [anti-discrimination policy](#). The fight against discrimination and social exclusion is a complementary approach to 'classical' employment policy which concentrates on ensuring that work pays, as well as on removing unemployment, poverty and inactivity traps.

*The following sections of this document provide links to selected examples of good practice that have emerged from the work of EQUAL. The experience of the DPs from which these examples are drawn also reflects learning and outcomes from the Transnational Partnerships (TPs) in which they were engaged. More detailed information on the selected DPs is accessible via the **hyperlinks**<sup>8</sup> that are embedded in the text.*

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<sup>7</sup> During the second round of EQUAL (2005-2007) the fight against ethnic discrimination in the labour market formed a key aspect of the European programme for mainstreaming the good practices emerging from the work of EQUAL. Within the framework of this programme, a [European Mainstreaming Platform](#) was initiated, in 2006, which operated throughout 2007 and culminated in a major European conference on [Acting against Ethnic Discrimination in Employment](#), in November 2007. See also EQUAL News articles on [Action against Ethnic Discrimination in the Labour Market](#) and [Diversity in EQUAL – Now, you can read all about it!](#)

<sup>8</sup> Some URLs contained in linked documents may no longer be valid if the corresponding websites have changed since the publication of the linked document. Where this occurs in relation to links referring to the

## FOSTERING ANTI-DISCRIMINATION SKILLS AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE WITHIN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

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*“Many stakeholders maintain that discrimination, while not being the only reason for the exclusion of ethnic minorities from the labour market, is in fact the most important one.”<sup>9</sup>*

Discrimination against ethnic minorities in the labour market is still a daily reality and the most powerful driving forces for change and progress in this field are the two EU [Anti-Discrimination Directives](#). However, laws by themselves are not enough. If discrimination is to be eliminated, the practices of institutions and organisations and individuals’ attitudes and behaviour have to change.<sup>10</sup> EQUAL projects have sought to bring about change by challenging professional practices and providing training for employment intermediaries. Their approaches started from the realisation that anti-discrimination skills, such as cultural awareness, knowledge of relevant legal aspects and the capacity to evaluate one’s own potentially discriminatory practice are not, as yet, commonly recognised as being indispensable aspects of the professional competences of employment intermediaries. They piloted **new forms of training** that improve the capacities of in employment service professionals and other labour market actors to detect, and cope with, those discriminatory practices that immigrants and ethnic minority groups often face in recruitment and placement processes.

### **Finland:**

In North Karelia, Finland, the [MORO](#) DP (Multicultural Recruiting and Learning) focused on training for the staff of the public services with the aim of increasing the skills of these officials to operate in diverse working environments and in a multicultural customer service situation. A local working group of officials was established and the idea was to use a bottom-up method through the participation and empowerment of these officials in planning and implementing project activities. The participants acted as a pilot group and their experiences and needs provided models to create ‘MONITULKKI’ – Toolbox for Everyday Cross-cultural Interaction,’ which is a collection of training materials for multicultural customer service.

### **France:**

The [ESPERE](#) DP (*Engagement du Service Public de l'Emploi pour Restaurer l'Egalite*) launched in an unprecedented programme of in-service training to sensitise the principal agents of the Public Employment Service (PES) and their hierarchies to the issue of combating and preventing discrimination in the fields of employment and vocational training. This programme was aimed at the entire PES, including its different services and agencies with distinct responsibilities for placement, training, advice and inspection/control. It was tested in six pilot areas and is now being mainstreamed on a much wider scale with the intention of ultimately reaching all 50 000 officials working in the Public Employment Service. The joint ‘[Charter of the Public Employment Service](#)’ against discrimination, for equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity, which was adopted by the institutions of the PES and the Ministry of Employment in November 2005, provides a strong underpinning for this mainstreaming process.

The [LATITUDE](#) DP is an outstanding example of unconditional commitment to combating discrimination in placement practices and access to work. The lead partner, ADECCO, a private nationwide temporary employment agency, has implemented a progressive, active policy of non-discrimination in recruitment processes and in the workplace, throughout all its branches. This strategy is promoted internally by in-service training for staff and also through awareness raising and information activities aimed at clients and the general public. ADECCO’s stance on non-discrimination permeates all of its external relationships with clients, which also entails a categorical refusal of clients’ orders if they don’t comply with this policy. Very similar positions

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EQUAL Common Database (ECDB), the first part of the URL ([equal.cec.eu.int/](http://equal.cec.eu.int/)) should be replaced by [webgate.ec.europa.eu](http://webgate.ec.europa.eu), without changing the other parts

<sup>9</sup> Report of the High Level Advisory Group of Experts on the Social Integration of Ethnic Minorities and their Full Participation in the Labour Market, December 2007

<sup>10</sup> Within this context, see also [The Contribution of the EQUAL Community Initiative to the Full Implementation of the Equality in Employment and Racial Equality Directives](#) and [Equality, the Labour Force and the Law](#)

and activities are actively promoted by ADIA France, another large temporary employment agency involved in the DP.

Both DPs mentioned above also played a significant role in the National Thematic Network set up in France to reinforce EQUAL's activities in combating racial discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Germany:**

The German **Competence and Diversity** DP cooperated closely with Job-Centres and other actors on the labour market to improve employment opportunities for migrants in its region. The Job-Centres coordinate all local employment and (re)-activation services for long-term unemployed people in one single structure, but their capacity to place the 'most difficult' clients is still limited. The job description and required competences of placement officers are not clearly defined and there is also a need to increase the agencies' abilities to develop responses that are better tailored to local needs. Cooperation with external partners and putting certain services out to tender provide only partial solutions. The DP introduced new training for about 500 members of staff working in local and regional administrations, including Job-Centres, in order to enhance the intercultural competence of local or regional agencies, in both their roles of providing public services and acting as employers. The DP also seconded specialised members of staff with intercultural experience. Their role was to enhance the capacities of local placement services to offer personalised support that took account of the needs and individual circumstances of immigrant job seekers. They acted as contact people for all questions regarding the target group, provided multi-lingual advice and vocational guidance, identified possible placement opportunities and helped with the preparation of job applications and job interviews. The experience gained from the training activities now provides a basis for the development of a professional profile for placement officers working with migrants and encourages them to make more creative use of flexible options rather than applying 'standard' tools and solutions.

In a wider sense, the strengthening of intercultural competence within employment services can also facilitate new approaches to **valuing immigrants' skills and qualifications**. In most EU Member States, the qualifications of third country immigrants are not formally recognised and because their potential is not perceived by employment intermediaries and the business world, many immigrants have to accept jobs which require a level of skills below the qualifications that they had originally obtained. As a result, they experience a process of de-qualification which can ultimately lead them into social deprivation and poverty.

EQUAL DPs have sought solutions to this problem by ensuring that employment and training intermediaries and relevant multipliers are well informed about how to navigate through the complicated web of administrative regulations that hinder the recognition of qualifications. They have also demonstrated how the potential of immigrants can be revealed to, and used in, the labour market, so that a much closer match can be made between their employment and their real levels of competence.

#### **Austria:**

The Austrian **InterCulturExpress** (ICE) DP set out to assist immigrants who had already acquired a qualification and/or work experience in their country of origin. A central pillar in the DP's work was a project named **AMPEL** (the German word for traffic light), which developed information modules on questions related to the validation or recognition of the qualifications of immigrants that had been obtained outside Austria. The AMPEL project designed a programme of one-day **workshops** for experts, counsellors and other multipliers to transfer knowledge about regulations and procedures concerning the recognition of educational achievements and vocational qualifications. These workshops also covered a range of related topics such as intercultural counselling, anti-discrimination strategies and diversity management. Over 500 multipliers participated in the 30 workshops and more than half of them were of migrant origin themselves.

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<sup>11</sup> This network brought together 18 of the 22 DPs that were launched in France during the first round of EQUAL to combat racial discrimination. See [National networks of DPs tackling discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities](#)



Based on the successful approach piloted by the AMPEL project, the Vienna labour administration introduced a two-day training programme on issues related to diversity and migration. This training involved almost all of the 160 staff members of the local services and is now compulsory for all new employees. Proof of special competence in these fields is also required from training staff carrying out services that are put out to tender by the Vienna Labour Market Service for Young People. Similar initiatives have also been taken by the Labour Market Services in other federal states of Austria including, for example, Upper-Austria and Tyrol.

#### **Germany:**

The ***MigraNet*** DP, which until 2006 was called *FLUEQUAL*, operated in Bavaria. This DP developed a 'Skills Assessment for Migrants Tool' that was designed to help individuals to collate information on the skills and competences that they had acquired, throughout their life, through formal or informal learning and experience in places such as the family home, school, work and the neighbourhood. The DP combined this development with further action including intercultural training for case-managers in employment offices. The tool is now available both in print form and as a PC-application and can be downloaded from a special website which also provides detailed background information and instructions for its use. Advice is offered on complementary training and learning opportunities to help users of the tool to develop and obtain accreditation or certification of their vocational capacities and capabilities.

In their ESF Operational Programmes, a number of Member States have stressed the need to develop new forms of staff training to increase the ability of labour market institutions to deliver effective services adapted to new needs. While a large part of the intended training programmes is related to strengthening the administrative and management capacities of PES, good practice from EQUAL could incite the planners of such programmes to widen their scope of action to address some of the issues set out above.

Examples of planned initiatives for capacity building amongst the staff of PES include:

**Poland** – *The National Human Capital OP indicates that labour market institutions face serious problems resulting from the lack of an integrated system of human resources training, considerable fluctuation of employees and an insufficient level of professional competences for implementing tasks related to social and employment activation. The OP therefore envisages the development of a nationwide training programme involving all key PES employees to improve their skills in providing better information, placement and counselling services;*

**Romania** – *The National HRD OP states that in building up and setting up a modern PES, the staff in charge should become acquainted with new demands for services resulting from changes in the economy and on the labour market. The PES will initiate a programme for the qualification and (re)-qualification of staff involved in providing employment and assistance services, including support to vulnerable groups and persons with special needs such as Roma people, persons with disabilities, young people and other persons at risk. This training programme will also raise awareness, amongst PES staff, of a new service culture to cope with the main changes on the labour market.*

## **DEVELOPING COOPERATION AND BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

The increasing complexity of the issues to be tackled in the local labour market makes it impossible for a single actor to solve all of the problems alone. Effective (re)-integration into employment does not only depend on the performance of PES staff who are often overburdened with multiple roles, but also on the contribution of other players including employers and trade unions. In addition, to counteract long-term unemployment and marginalisation, comprehensive, holistic action is required such as the use of integrated pathway approaches, which relies on a good interplay between institutional operators with different administrative responsibilities. Therefore, in many EU Member States, the PES are actively seeking to increase their co-

operation with other local actors such as municipalities, social security departments, social partners, education and training institutions and voluntary organisations.<sup>12</sup>

However, the multiplicity of actors can also create problems of coordination and accountability, and there are open questions about what kind of services should be the core responsibilities of the PES. Some PES have budgets for active measures that can be used for outsourcing certain tasks to external service providers and thus promote a mixed public-private market for employment services. These budgets provided an important resource for piloting new models of cooperation within the framework of EQUAL DPs which explored ways of making best use of such new partnerships to cater for vulnerable groups that have acute needs for individualised and tailor-made support on the road to employment. Experience from these DPs brought into focus a number of issues that should be addressed in developing models of cooperation, including questions about facilitating joint planning between competing service providers working under contract to PES, acquainting service providers with the practices of job-centres and ensuring quality control and compliance with PES procedures.

A number of DPs sought to combine different types of action and involve different groups of actors in an integrated territorial approach. They started from the perspective that fragmented action without effective coordination and communication between the key local or regional bodies has very little positive effect on the situation of groups that face multiple disadvantages in the labour market. Much greater impact can be achieved when structures and processes that have a role in opening pathways to employment integrate their different measures into a comprehensive strategy which engages all the actors involved in a given territory's economic and social life. EQUAL's focus on the [Principle or Building Block of Partnership](#) fostered such strategic approaches.

Findings from EQUAL also underscore the increasingly important role of NGOs and voluntary associations in fostering the integration of disadvantaged people into employment. In EQUAL DPs, NGOs filled gaps in situation where other groups of key actors had restricted institutional responsibilities that limited their involvement. They were experienced in finding flexible, informal solutions and could also act as lubricants ensuring that cooperation between different groups of actors ran smoothly. NGOs represented, or maintained direct links with, vulnerable groups, such as immigrants and ethnic minorities, and offered services and support to them. In this, they complemented the work of public services, whilst being largely dependent on public or third party funding.

These issues are also reflected in ESF Operational Programmes:

**Cyprus** – *The OP mentions that there will be specific measures to broaden and improve the functioning of labour market institutions include action to safeguard integrated and effective geographical coverage of the network of Public Employment Services,.... take an integrated approach to matching supply and demand which is fully in line with the needs of, vulnerable groups and companies,.....strengthen co-operation between Public Employment Services and local authorities and social partners;*

**Spain** – *Several OPs emphasise the need to improve collaboration of PES with local organisations and NGOs in order to provide professional work experience placements for disadvantaged groups (National OP),.....the creation, by the PES, of a network of Territorial Units for Employment, Local and Technological Development that bring employment instruments and policies closer to territories and different groups, adapted to their special needs (Andalusian OP),.....the promotion of territorial agreements and services that encourage coordination of the various agents and improve the match between employment supply and demand (Catalonian OP);*

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<sup>12</sup> Active partnership requires new methods of management. The ESF Regulation provides for specific support to promote good governance through the development of partnerships and networking of various stakeholders, at the transnational, national, regional and local levels, in order to mobilise for reforms in the area of employment and social inclusion

**France** – The National OP signals that special ESF support will be provided for new action to stimulate cooperation between **the whole range** of employment and training intermediaries, including public bodies and agencies, local initiatives and private associations, in order to improve and coordinate their work in a territorial context and thus bring the entire armoury of existing services closer to their clients;

**Hungary** – The National Social Renewal OP foresees the establishment of an integrated employment and social service system which will create new legal and institutional conditions enabling the outsourcing of services to non-governmental organisations and providing quality assurance with respect to external service provider;

**Italy** – National OPs support the progressive opening of placement and mediation services/structures to new public and private actors through mixed systems. At the regional level, a new emphasis is being placed on the development of more personalised services by the PES, based on a better analysis of the needs of disadvantaged groups and the use of external expertise within the framework of joint project work.

This section presents new approaches that were piloted through EQUAL to provide support and services that were not part of the existing provision. Good Practice from EQUAL DPs concentrates, in particular, on the following issues:

- Complementing statutory services;
- Introducing new roles to support labour market integration;
- Supporting integrated territorial approaches.

As in the previous section, all these examples have a strong focus on the situation of immigrants. However, as ethnic minorities share many problems with socially disadvantaged members of the majority population, many of the services and practices introduced by these DPs, as well as their approaches to cooperation with PES, can also be applied to working with other disadvantaged groups.

## Complementing Statutory Services

Existing mainstream services are not always well-equipped to respond to the needs of immigrants. The names and remits of these services are constantly changing and, even for a native person, it is difficult to understand which service can help with which problem or issue. In addition, the initial contact often has to be made by telephone and this can create an extra difficulty for a person who is not fluent in the language of the 'host' country. EQUAL DPs have tackled this issue in a number of ways, often by ensuring that members of the services' staff are training in intercultural communication and/or through the provision of multi-lingual information and advice.

### Finland:

The Finnish **Promenio DP** succeeded in building up effective, structured cooperation between the Public Employment Service and 60 organisations and associations that supported migrants in the Turku region. The project had a major impact on strengthening the capacity of these organisations to collaborate with public agencies and between themselves in developing new and more client-oriented services. Its work led to the creation of two multicultural umbrella organisations and the designation of special 'voluntary sector correspondents' in the public sector who maintained close contact with the voluntary bodies. Intercultural training for both public service staff and actors representing immigrant communities was one of the keys to achieving the DPs results.

### Germany:

The **KUMULUS-PLUS** DP, in Berlin, pioneered a new network for **intercultural** guidance and labour market integration that used differentiated approaches to reach out to the various immigrant communities and thus complemented the limited experience and resources of the public services in this particular field. Operating as mediators between public services and immigrants, the DP's guidance counsellors provided individual coaching for their 'clients.' Most of the 11 partners in the network were NGOs, including immigrant self-help organisations, but the DP also involved other actors working in the social economy and in the private sector. Each

member offered a particular type of experience, which complemented that of the other partners, such as the capacity to communicate with different immigrant communities in their mother tongue and/or expertise in a specific field. Thus, the network provided a comprehensive and coherent package of services that none of the partners could have offered on their own.

### **Italy:**

The Italian ***Visibili-Invisibili*** DP successfully established special access points, or one-stop-shops, for migrants which responded to a range of different individual needs. These information counters operated within the local job centres (Centri per l'Impiego – CPI) in the cities of Asti and Biella to provide careers advice, help with validation/ recognition of informal skills and writing a CV, contacts with businesses and details about all the civic services in the area, including family assistance. This new provision marked an important step in changing the role of the CPI from providing registration points for unemployed job seekers to becoming real actors in the labour market. A central element in bringing about such change was the deployment in the CPI's premises of cultural mediators from a migrant background, who had particular experience in working with migrant clients and could offer immediate personal support and direct links with other services. Owing to bureaucratic barriers that prohibited recruitment of non-nationals as PES staff, the appointment of these cultural mediators was only possible in the context of project work launched within the framework of EQUAL.

The DP's main contribution to the modernisation of PES in the Piedmont region was its role in piloting a stronger focus on, and a personalised approach to, the needs of disadvantaged people. It also fostered a new 'problem solving' mentality amongst the partners and generated greater openness to the methods and practices of networking. A guide for employment intermediaries was produced, as were communication tools and a model on-line counter. The project's products were incorporated into the catalogue of services and tools of the Piedmont region that is available to all actors involved in policies to combat unemployment in the region. The regional OP provides for the follow-up of this new PES strategy through ESF mainstream action and access to funding for more broadly-based development work in this field, which is now conditional on partnership agreements to improve cooperation and coordination between the different actors.

In a similar way, the Italian DP ***Il lungo cammino dei Sinti e dei Rom: percorsi verso il lavoro*** (The long road of the Sinti and Roma: pathways to employment) created new 'Sportelli Integrati' to increase the access of Roma people to the network of services provided in the Emilia Romagna region. These one-stop-shops were closely linked to the public and private services in the fields of social work, training and employment and brought these services closer to the Roma communities. Some of the 'sportelli' were actually based in the Gypsy camps in Parma and Piacenza. They offered detailed information and advice on many aspects that affected the everyday living and working conditions of Sinti and Roma such as housing, health, schools and services for children, employment opportunities and work permits. These contacts also helped Roma people to understand more about the complexity of Italian society and how to relate to, and interact with, its institutions, agencies, schools and political structures. The work of the DP was coordinated by the regional vocational training organisation of CISL which is the second largest confederation of trade unions in Italy.

### **New professional profiles: Mediation, Mentoring, Tutoring**

Many DPs strongly argued the case for the enhanced involvement of intercultural mediators and counsellors in combating ethnic discrimination and in the management of the integration process. They emphasised the pivotal role that mediators, 'path-planners,' mentors, tutors and 'multipliers' can play in bridging the gap between the immigrant community and employers or public services and in providing individual guidance and follow-up for people who have various types of disadvantage. A common concern of most DPs that piloted the new roles of intercultural mediators related to the status of these operators and the question of how their involvement could best be sustained, both in terms of organisation and of funding. A number of DPs therefore placed particular emphasis on establishing clear job profiles for tutors, who accompanied, commented on and evaluated the integration process, mentors, who acted as 'social managers' or counsellors and other related roles, and on developing training packages and methods of their accreditation for these new roles.

### **Finland:**

The Finnish [\*\*\*Majakka-Beacon\*\*\*](#) DP piloted Supported Employment Services for migrants in three municipalities within the Helsinki region. This new approach included the setting up of local employment teams involving professional staff in new types of roles. Specially trained job coaches worked together with job finders, language teachers and case managers to provide a comprehensive employment service to both immigrant job seekers and potential employers. A particular feature of the DP's approach was that the job coaches worked in pairs, with one job coach coming from an immigrant background and the other being a native Finn. This practice seemed to increase the clients' confidence in the service and gave a positive signal to employers by demonstrating that migrants can undertake skilled and demanding positions.

### **Germany:**

In Germany, the [\*\*\*KUMULUS-PLUS\*\*\*](#) DP developed a new curriculum for training highly qualified Russian-speaking immigrants as intercultural vocational counsellors. This special focus on **vocational** guidance was something new and different from other intercultural work. Most of the participants had a degree in pedagogy or psychology but as these qualifications were not recognised in Germany many of them did voluntary work in social organisations where they could use their knowledge and experience. The new curriculum and its final certificate offered them a chance to qualify for professional intercultural guidance work in job centres, public or private agencies, schools or training organisations.

### **Portugal:**

In its approach to strengthening and empowering groups of immigrants who had experienced poverty and social exclusion, the Portuguese [\*\*\*DiverCidade\*\*\*](#) DP addressed the need to bridge the gap between service providers and the immigrants themselves. It provided training for people who had had first hand experience of living in immigrant or Roma communities so that they could work as 'Life Experience Experts' in 'tandem' with qualified members of staff. By feeding in their experience, these new operators made an important input to all the activities of the DP. The overall objective of this approach was to create a new professional profile of a Life Experience Expert<sup>13</sup> and to promote new legislation through which this profile and the related training could be validated. The DP expected that this formal recognition would stimulate the active use of these new professional roles in those organisations that continue to be responsible for policies and services for the immigrants.

### **Spain:**

Much of the success of the Spanish [\*\*\*Pangea\*\*\*](#) project hinged on the people that the DP calls 'inter-cultural links.' These links were based in each of the four main towns where the project had a centre and together they also operated in another 35 municipalities. They provided a bridge between the immigrant population and the opportunities and services offered by the host communities, especially those that related to the labour market. All of the four links and their coordinator came from immigrant backgrounds and received specific training covering topics such as the history of immigration, legislation relating to immigrants, intercultural communication, mediation in different settings and job search skills. Contact was made with members of the immigrant population wherever they were to be found. Markets and shops proved to be very useful meeting points. Another important aspect in making contact was language. Within the DP, there were professional workers who, in addition to communicating in Spanish, could speak Arabic, Romanian, Russian, English or French.

### **United Kingdom:**

The Employment Service, in Stockport, in the north west of England used the [\*\*\*Embracing Diversity\*\*\*](#) DP to experiment not with a new role but with using an existing role in a new setting.

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<sup>13</sup> See also [Presentation DiverCidade](#) at the EQUAL conference on [Acting against Ethnic Discrimination in Employment](#), in November 2007.

Through the DP, Senior Employment Officers were seconded to individual companies and functioned in many ways as extra members of staff helping these enterprises to take an active role in recruiting a diverse workforce. These Senior Employment Officers helped develop more open recruitment policies and provided training to employers and existing members of staff on issues related to the employment of certain categories of disadvantaged people including immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. After recruitment, they also continued to work with the employer to ensure that the employees' needs were understood and that they were retained in employment.

## **Integrated Territorial Approaches**

EQUAL experience demonstrates that **local and regional authorities** are particularly well placed to coordinate responses to the range of problems that can undermine the precarious employment situation of ethnic minorities such as language deficits, lack of recognised qualifications, difficulties in finding suitable housing and also entrenched prejudices and gaps in intercultural communication. Almost no other single group of actors has a greater capacity for leadership and for the coordination and pooling of resources in this field. DPs have shown how this capacity can be used to design initiatives that adopt an integrated approach and involve all relevant public and private actors in their implementation. Such initiatives require a clear commitment from different departments and effective coordination between them and EQUAL examples illustrate that where these conditions have been met, local or regional authority leadership has been a very strong factor in delivering a programme of comprehensive territorial action. In other cases, similar results were also achieved when the relevant authorities played a major pro-active role in the work of DPs that were managed by other local or regional key actors such as NGOs, which had experience and a track record of networking.

### **Czech Republic:**

The Czech ***POLIS*** project was launched as a pilot programme in the cities of Plzeň, Ústí nad Labem and Bílina to deliver a comprehensive package of counselling and support for people in danger of social exclusion, most of whom were Roma. POLIS coordinated the services of those local bodies like social welfare departments, education authorities, housing departments, employment agencies, NGOs and also the police that were in regular contact with such people. The project assisted in the design and implementation of municipal policies to improve the living conditions of marginalised groups and to stem, and if possibly reverse, the gradual creation of social ghettos and slums. In parallel, the DP attempted to dismantle and prevent discriminatory practices that impeded the access of those groups to employment. This involved close cooperation with employers and intercultural training and awareness raising activities for employees of the local institutions. The DP also provided support services and educational programmes aimed at motivating and empowering disadvantaged people.

### **Germany:**

Bringing together different types of actors to cooperate in a comprehensive territorial approach to improve the vocational integration of immigrants was a particularly strong feature of the ***ALBuM*** DP, in Germany. In Hannover, *ALBuM* has established a sustainable network connecting local minority organisations, education and training institutions and the municipal administration, which provided new opportunities for the training and qualification of immigrant workers. All of these players were brought together under the slogan "Living intercultural strengths together". The new training, which combined theory and practice in enterprises, made it possible for migrants to qualify as 'foreign trade specialists' and 'advisors specialised in intercultural issues'. The network also assisted with the organisational development and the skills-upgrading of workers in companies run by members of ethnic minorities, and companies with multicultural staff. It offered advice and intercultural training programmes aimed at employers, employees and their representatives enabling them to prevent, or cope, with intercultural conflicts. All these activities now form an integral part of the City Administration's approach to developing a 'local integration plan.'

### **Spain:**

The ***Igualdad en la diversidad*** project established a new territorial platform in the district of Girona that involved all relevant stakeholders in a common approach to improving both the employability and the labour market situation of ethnic minorities in the region. This new platform brought

together local administrations, employers organisations, trade unions and NGOs. It made it possible to better articulate and coordinate different types of action including awareness raising and sensitisation activities, the use of new methods for assessing and presenting formal and informal competences of immigrant workers, new training courses for immigrants and individualised job mediation and coaching services for members of ethnic minorities. Networking and a structured exchange of information between the different stakeholders facilitated joint planning and helped to counter the risk of fragmentation that was always inherent in a project involving such a wide range of different, and relatively small scale, activities.

## CONCLUSIONS

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Admittedly, 'Modernising and Strengthening Employment Services' was not one of the major priority themes for the work of EQUAL. Only a relatively small number of Development Partnerships were launched to address this particular issue and most of them were mainly concerned with improving the contribution of these services to (re)-integrating migrants and ethnic minorities into employment.

However, the existing examples of good practice from EQUAL can help to sharpen the focus of support offered by PES to the individual needs of disadvantaged people and migrants who represent a very substantial number of such people. EQUAL DPs demonstrated what employment services can do to counteract discrimination in the labour market and they explored ways of providing more effective services through partnership and cooperation. However, further action is required to maintain the momentum that their experience has generated. Transfer and mainstreaming of the lessons that can be gained from the work of EQUAL could be significantly enhanced if Member States' ESF Managing Authorities were to encourage initiatives, within the 2007-2013 programming period, that promote new approaches to capacity building and anti-discrimination training in public and private intermediary services for employment and training. They could also support communication and dissemination activities to ensure that key actors and practitioners in this field are made aware of relevant approaches and practices that have been piloted through EQUAL.

New ESF action should be designed to help public and private employment services to ensure that all their labour market intermediaries have access to, and benefit from, specific training on issues related to respecting ethnic and cultural diversity, intercultural knowledge, anti-discrimination legislation and non-discriminatory intermediation techniques. The European Network of Public Employment Services should be encouraged to more explicitly recognise, in its Mission Statement, the vital role of these services in preventing discrimination in access to work, and to address this issue through the work programme of the network. Moreover, in monitoring progress on the implementation of the European Employment Guidelines, the European Commission should draw attention to specific gaps in Public Employment Services' responses to the common objective of combating labour market discrimination against certain groups, including immigrants and ethnic minorities.

EQUAL experience also confirms that, by working in local partnerships together with other actors, the Public Employment Services have been able to leverage additional financial, social and knowledge-based investments to support sustainable development and employment. 'Ring-fencing' some of their resources for buying in external expertise and services can provide more flexibility for the involvement of actors with new professional profiles and for adapting quickly to emerging requirements. Further developmental work should include a focus on:

- Which practices of cooperation, outsourcing and sub-contracting are most appropriate for generating territorial partnerships that can best meet the needs of disadvantaged people?
- How can the quality of service and compliance with administrative regulations be ensured and at the same time 'cherry picking' and bureaucratic overburdening be avoided?
- How can partnership approaches be used to design services not only **for** but also **with** disadvantaged people?

One of the principles at the heart of EQUAL was mainstreaming, which implies that particular efforts should be made to integrate into policy and practice those approaches that proved successful in the EQUAL 'laboratory.' However, results from pilot action don't always automatically attract the attention of policy makers and often it can take some time to create

enough evidence of impact to make a convincing case. New ESF action up to 2013 can be harnessed to broadening this body of evidence and to accelerate the dissemination and transfer of good practice. Future transnational cooperation and exchange activities could focus on reinforcing and promoting approaches that extend the experience gained within EQUAL. This would reduce the 'implementation gap' and boost the quality of ESF mainstream action to strengthen the role of public and private employment services in achieving an inclusive labour market.