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Synthesis of the Evaluation Reports of the EQUAL Programmes in the EU10 Member States Submitted to the Commission within 2006 and 2009

Synthesis Report prepared for the
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Abbreviations

BE	Belgium
CIP	Community Initiative Programme
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DP	Development Partnership
ECDB	EQUAL Common Database
EE	Estonia
ESF	European Social Fund
EU10	10 new Member States of the European Union (CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SK, SI)
FI	Finland
FR	France
GR	Greece
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
MA	Managing Authorities
MT	Malta
NSS	National Support Structures
NTN	National Thematic Network
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
SK	Slovak Republic
SI	Slovenia
SPD	Single Programming Document
SW	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

Thematic priorities

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

Executive Summary

This report provides a synthesis of the national evaluation reports of the EQUAL Programmes in the EU10 Member States¹ submitted to the European Commission within 2006 and 2009. For this final synthesis report the evaluation results of the 2007 analysis of the implementation of key principles were updated. In accordance with the “Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation”, elaborated by the working group on EQUAL evaluation in 2007-2008 the final evaluation focused on innovation, mainstreaming and impact. In addition to this an assessment of the value added of EQUAL is presented. Finally recommendations - based on national evaluations and the results of the synthesis of EU10 - are provided.

Methodological Approach of the EU10 Synthesis Report

- (1) This report is based on the results of two evaluation phases in the EU10. Under the responsibility of the new Member States 19 national evaluation reports have been produced. All new Member States produced an intermediate and final report, only **SK** did not deliver a final report so far. The EU10 evaluation team visited the new Member States twice for additional interviews with the national evaluators and representatives of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures.
- (2) The national evaluation reports differed in the methodological tools used. There are large variations in the evaluation process as to the time span, methods and contents. The final national evaluation reports were made available between June 2008 – and April 2009. The “Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation”, elaborated by the working group on EQUAL evaluation 2007-2008 was respected only by few national evaluations. This rendered the synthesis exercise difficult in some aspects.

Monitoring and Evaluation of EQUAL in the New Member States

- (3) The comparison of the monitoring and evaluation of EQUAL in the new Member States clearly indicates not only large differences in the applied methods but shows also that this evaluation was implemented against the background of different evaluation cultures in the new Member States.
- (4) The national evaluation system was based on the national monitoring system, self-evaluation of the DPs and the national evaluation reports. The monitoring system served to a large extent for the financial and technical control. A number of national evaluators were criticising that in particular financial control was absorbing a high volume of time resources of all actors: the Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and DPs. It was argued that this limited the scope for monitoring the implementation of the key principles and the quality of the activities.

¹ Czech Republic (CZ), Cyprus (CY), Estonia (EE), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL) Slovakia (SK) and Slovenia (SI)

- (5) Some new Member States (e.g. **CY, SK**) were using on-the-spot visits and regular meetings with the DP to monitor the qualitative dimension of Programme implementation and used these monitoring instruments for the Programme Management.
- (6) The implementation of self-evaluation at DP level varied widely between the new Member States. Almost all DPs were carrying out self-evaluation in **CY, LT, EE** and **LV**. Only about half (or even less) of the DPs were conducting self-evaluation in **HU, PL, CZ** and **SI**. No self-evaluation activities of DPs were reported in **MT** and **SK**.
- (7) Guidance towards DPs on the purpose and methods to conduct self-evaluation was crucial. In case active guidance was given, this was provided either by the national evaluator or external experts.
- (8) Some new Member States advised their DPs to organise the self-evaluation either internally or externally, while other Member States (**PL, LV** and **EE**) were clearly in favour of internal approaches.
- (9) National evaluators analysed the monitoring reports (except **CY**) and interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures were usually conducted. The ECDB data base was only rarely used. Self-evaluation reports of DPs were used systematically only in **CY** and **LT**. In most other new Member States self-evaluation reports did not exist for all DPs. In **LV** and **PL** self-evaluation reports could not be analysed as they were considered to be only for internal use for DPs. Interviews with representatives of National Thematic Networks were conducted only in a few cases as in some new Member States the National Thematic Networks were not set-up at the time when the fieldwork started. Interviews with experts were in general not conducted as access to external experts was very difficult in most new Member States. Surveys were conducted in most new Member States.
- (10) Case studies at DP level were carried out in addition or instead of surveys. This permitted to gather the view of different actors (mainly DP partners) and to make an analysis of the whole material available of the DPs (monitoring reports and if available evaluation reports). However, even in the context of the case studies interviews with beneficiaries were only rarely conducted. As the evaluation of EQUAL contains many qualitative aspects, case studies were a valuable instrument in order to analyse and understand processes.
- (11) A combination of different sources was essential in order to get a balanced view. In case self-assessment items were introduced in questionnaires, the evaluator should have been aware of possible bias generated by the type of respondent.
- (12) The national evaluation reports were used for communication about the Programme and support of programme management. Only in few new

Member States recommendations in the national evaluation reports were discussed (e.g. **LT**) and some recommendations were taken over (e.g. **CZ**). Managing Authorities and National Support Structures in a few new Member States would have wished national evaluations to be more analytical and thus give more guidance on the implementation of the Programme.

- (13) In the new Member States the development of an evaluation culture differed widely. The evaluation of public activities policies was a quite new instrument in the new Member States. So national evaluations were sometimes a hampered process and were seen in some countries with certain reluctance. On the other hand it can be stated that in some countries the EQUAL process contributed to a more active and constructive use of evaluation. Some Member States extended the evaluation (e.g. **CZ**) and initiated additional evaluation projects with focus on special issues (e.g. **MT** and **CZ**).

The implementation of the EQUAL key principles

The implementation of the partnership principle

- (14) The formation of partnerships for delivering employment and social inclusion policies was new in most new Member States. Only in **CY** and **MT**, there existed previously a tradition of macro-concertation and partnerships. Working in partnerships at the micro level was, however, in these two countries new as well.
- (15) The inclusion of different types of partners varied between new Member States, while their role was mostly comparable:
- NGOs were in general well represented in DPs. They were key actors in social inclusion policies. Their involvement was important as they had a deep knowledge of the target group. It was further observed that in particular small NGOs tended to be more innovative (e.g. **SK** and **LT**) than larger and established organisations. Finally, capacity building of the whole social economy sector was an important issue in new Member States;
 - Social partners tended to be underrepresented, except in **CY** and **MT**. This was certainly linked to the less important role of the social partners at national level in these Member States, which was also reflected in a low union density. In principle, social partners were important partners with regard to mainstreaming;
 - A number of evaluators critically assessed the weak involvement of private companies;
 - In some new Member States mainly governmental organisations were the lead partners (e.g. **MT**). Otherwise they were often found to be partners in DPs. Generally, the involvement of governmental organisations was regarded as very useful by national evaluators, mainly for mainstreaming purposes, but also for indicating which innovative solutions were feasible;
 - The presence of research organisations varied widely. Their involvement as lead partner for the development of innovative products

was not always regarded as useful. There was in particular a problem when research institutions carried out work they would have done anyway;

- The involvement of local and regional organisations was regarded as most helpful, as inequalities were particularly pronounced outside the capital cities. At the same time, some evaluators called for including the local level more actively in mainstreaming (e.g. **PL, CZ**).

(16) The analysis of national evaluation reports as well as the interviews showed that the main factors leading to the efficient and effective implementation of the partnership principles were:

- Culture of multi-partnerships and in particular of tripartite social dialogue (**CY, MT**);
- Use of the knowledge and skills of the different partners (widened knowledge base);
- The effectiveness of the partnership principle depends on how far it is possible to share a common responsibility for a project. It was argued by our interviewees that EQUAL offered the possibility to engage a learning process in this direction.

(17) The organisational structure of the partnerships followed a centralised model with a strong position of the lead partner in most cases. Many evaluators and Managing Authorities found the centralised model useful in their national context, as it ensured a more efficient management. It needs to be added that also highly centralised models could be observed: In these cases partners were employed by the lead partner. It is questionable whether such a strong position of the lead partner complies with the concept of partnerships.

(18) The main benefits of implementing the partnership principle consisted in:

- Contribution of the partnership principle to the development of innovation: The inclusion of small organisations provided a higher potential for innovation, as it was the small organisations which often brought in the new ideas. Furthermore, the implementation of the partnership principle generated new knowledge and improved access of the DP members to expertise;
- Contribution to mainstreaming: the involvement of public and para-public organisations (as well as of social partners) was beneficial for vertical mainstreaming. Further, the partnership principles allowed for horizontal mainstreaming (as expressed in the case of **CZ** and **MT**, but this might also be true for other new Member States);
- Building-up of networks: Contacts and networks partly proved to be sustainable after EQUAL (e.g. **LT**). This was important, in particular in Member States, where networking on social issues still needed to be developed;
- The implementation of the partnership principle was beneficial to improve cooperation at the local and regional level;
- Strengthening the NGO sector: Capacity building for small organisations, in particular NGOs was taking place.

- (19) The following problems were identified by national evaluators and Managing Authorities with regard to the implementation of the partnership principle:
- Difficulties in achieving mutual commitment and sharing responsibilities;
 - Cultural problems between public and private sector organisations
 - Conflicts between partners, in particular in relation to the distribution of funds;
 - Scarce financial resources and lack of human resources as well as of technical infrastructure in some DPs generally represented a problem;
 - High administrative burdens;
 - Small partnerships were more vulnerable to the problems of one partner.

The implementation of the empowerment principle

- (20) The concept of ‘empowerment’ was understood in different ways by the Managing Authorities and evaluators:
- (a) Capacity building of DPs (e.g. **CZ** Managing Authority, **EE** evaluators);
 - (b) Participation of partners and targets groups. In this case empowerment was understood in the sense of a widened partnership principle. The focus was set on the participation of the different kind of actors, partners and target groups, in the different stages of the project (e.g. **LV** evaluators);
 - (c) Empowerment of target groups (e.g. **PL** Managing Authority, **CZ** evaluator).
- (21) As a general finding, the concept of the empowerment principle was difficult to understand for DPs. Consequently, the implementation of the principle showed a number of deficits.
- (22) In case empowerment of the target groups was implemented this happened through:
- (a) (Mediated) involvement of beneficiaries in decision making (e.g. **CY**, **LV**);
 - (b) Capacity building of the target groups;
 - (c) Direct involvement of the representatives of the target groups in the working groups of DP (e.g. **LV**);
 - (d) Presenting opinions and needs of target groups in surveys;
 - (e) “Self-organizing” activities of the target groups (e.g. **LV**);
 - (f) Participation of target groups in fulfilling different project functions (**PL**).
- (23) The empowerment of target groups and their involvement in different stages of project implementation was regarded as very useful for the development of the innovation and its implementation (e.g. **PL**, **LV**).
- (24) Problems encountered by DPs consisted in particular in the difficulties to understand the concept as well as to involve specific target groups in all project phases. This was regarded as a particular problem of highly marginalised target groups.

The implementation of the transnationality principle

- (25) The main factor for choosing the “right transnational partners” consisted in the similarities of the problems of inequality and discrimination to be tackled (but not necessarily the target groups). In addition to the requirement of similarities of problems, choices made by the DPs of new Member States were also based on the type of countries with regard to the specific expertise and experience of a country in a given thematic field or on historical links or geographical proximity.
- (26) In general, due to budget restraints DP members did only rarely take part in transnational activities if they were not taking place in their home countries. Low budgets for transnational activities represented a problem in all new Member States.
- (27) The following benefits of transnational cooperation were identified in the national evaluation reports or were pointed out during the interviews:
- Contribution to innovation: transnational cooperation increased the knowledge and led to the transfer of methods. In many cases DPs were found to be highly motivated to learn from the experiences in other Member States and imported either tools or methods or ideas helping them to improve their own approaches. Examples for useful results for DP activities in the area of gender equality, the integration of ex-prisoners, of asylum-seekers, of disabled as well as of new methods of training were mentioned;
 - Contribution to mainstreaming: Transnational activities were helpful for political lobbying and mainstreaming, in particular if transnational events were organised;
 - Capacity building of DPs: Rising professionalism among DP member staff was named as a result from learning of other working cultures;
 - Learning from benchmarking;
 - Intangible results: It was stressed that many benefits were not visible;
 - Increasing self-confidence: This was reported as others can learn from DP approaches in the different new Member States.
- (28) Although the overall assessment on the implementation of transnationality made by evaluators, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures was positive, weak points were highlighted. The weaknesses referred mainly to the “low” level of activities as compared to the costs of transnational organisation. However, as outcomes and benefits were in many cases intangible a cost-benefit assessment was difficult. Evaluators were generally more critical in their assessments than Managing Authorities and National Support Structures.
- (29) DPs encountered the following problems while implementing transnationality:
- Short time frame for the implementation;
 - Language problems for communicating with the partners;
 - Differences in working culture;
 - Small budgets.

The implementation of gender mainstreaming

- (30) The depth of the evaluation of gender mainstreaming as well as the tools used varied quite significantly across the new Member States:
- (a) Assessments were based on surveys of type of DP activities with regard to gender mainstreaming (**CZ**) and on in-depth interviews (**LV**);
 - (b) A mechanical assessment of gender mainstreaming was made in several evaluation reports, in particular by referring to gender shares among participants and DP managers (e.g. **SI, MT**) and self-evaluation of DP (e.g. **LV, HU**);
 - (c) No explicit evaluation of gender mainstreaming was made in some reports (**SK, PL, EE, LT**);
 - (d) In **CZ** an additional extensive evaluation report on gender mainstreaming, including benchmarks with other Member States, was produced.
- (31) On the basis of our interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures as well as with the evaluators, it appeared that the implementation of gender equality received much attention only in few new Member States. This was in particular true for **CY** and **SI**. In contrast it was stressed in a number of new Member States that many DPs had no real strategy (e.g. in **CZ, SK, HU**) and DPs not focusing on the thematic priorities 4G and 4H had little awareness about gender equality as horizontal approach.
- (32) The main implementation impediments laid in a lack of awareness in the whole society (e.g. **LT, CZ, HU, MT, SK**). This resulted in many cases in both, a low interest in gender mainstreaming issues as well as in little understanding of the DPs of the gender mainstreaming concept. The problem was aggravated by the fact that little monitoring in this area was carried out.
- (33) Guidance in Gender Mainstreaming was organised in 2 ways:
- (a) Seminars were organised for the DPs in a formal way;
 - (b) Informally, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures were providing guidance to DPs (e.g. **SK**).

The Implementation of the innovation principle

- (34) The evaluation in the second evaluation phase should have focused on:
- Identifying the incidence of innovation;
 - Assessing the quality of innovation based on the following indicators: potential relevance, effectiveness, value added as compared with the existing policies, feasibility/sustainability and mainstreaming potential/capacity.
- However, only few national evaluation reports provided this information. Only in a few cases a systematic evaluation of the different dimensions of the quality of innovation was carried out (**CZ, LT, PL, EE**). The evaluations differ in their approaches and the tools chosen. While the **PL** evaluation

team relied basically on self-assessment of DPs, the **LV** evaluation team based its assessment on case studies. All applied a scoring method.

- (35) A major difficulty arose from the fact that two distinct evaluation tasks were in some cases mixed up:
- The evaluation of the quality of innovation including the analysis of mainstreaming potential and
 - The assessment and validation of good practice, which should have been part of the evaluation of the mainstreaming process.
- Eventually, in some new Member States the national evaluators played a central role in the validation process.
- (36) The tools for the evaluation of innovation in the national evaluation reports were mainly based on:
- Self-assessment of DPs made by answering survey questionnaires;
 - Self-assessment of DPs stated during interviews with DP manager and DP experts in the context of the case studies;
 - Analysis of self-evaluation reports;
 - In one case, additionally to DPs' self-assessment, the assessment of the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure was included. This helped to get a wider view (**PL** evaluation);
 - Additionally interviews with politicians were conducted (**LV** and **EE**);
 - In **EE** additional interviews with employers were carried out.
- (37) The following conditions for the emergence of innovation could be disentangled on the basis of the national evaluation reports and interview results:
- (a) The idea that EQUAL should be used to accelerate the "catching up" to EU social standards was widely spread in the new Member States. So in the new Member States EQUAL projects were in most cases based on a real political demand and on the analysis of needs.
 - (b) The further development of innovations and the ways to implement the innovative projects was positively influenced by the implementation of the other EQUAL principles, in particular by the implementation of the partnership principle.
 - (c) An important condition for EQUAL consisted in the laboratory function of EQUAL and the given possibility to make a risky investment.
 - (d) Knowledge of the sector and regional context and previous work on which the development of innovation could be based on was important.
- (38) The process and the dynamics of the development of innovation during action 2 were generally not analysed by the national evaluators. On the basis of interviews with the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures we can conclude that changes in the design of projects and products and the work programme were not very frequent. In our view this is a sign that the laboratory function of EQUAL was reduced by the administrative burden caused by changes in the projects.

- (39) We can distinguish between a more pro-active and a reactive stance of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures concerning changes in the project. The pro-active approach included the promotion of a project's adaptation to a changing environment.
- (40) The analysis of the evaluation of innovation made by national evaluators in the evaluation reports and by Managing Authorities and National Support Structures during the interviews showed that the innovations developed and implemented by DPs were supporting a shift from traditional policy making to tailored target groups. In this context different type of innovations could be identified (note, however, that there can be overlaps between these different types):
- (a) New target groups: In particular disabled (e.g. **LV**), but also elderly (e.g. **PL**), young people (e.g. Roma (e.g. **SI, SK**), highly marginalised groups (ex-offenders (e.g. **SK**), drug-addicts, etc.) and young people coming from institutional care (e.g. **MT**) were targeted by EQUAL. Asylum seekers represented a new target group for all new Member States.
 - (b) New policy areas or policy areas with new approaches: in particular diversity management (e.g. **CZ**) and gender mainstreaming (e.g. **CY, MT, SI, CZ**), the creation of advisory centres and specific measures for business start-ups of target groups (e.g. **CZ, MT, SI**), further development of the social enterprise sector (e.g. **CZ, PL, SK**).
 - (c) Innovative solutions in more traditional policy areas: This concerned the development of new methods and tools in the area of training. Motivation of target groups and tailor-made approaches were key to these approaches (e.g. **SK**). Nevertheless, this policy area was in general regarded as less innovative by the evaluators.
 - (d) Introduction of new methods: These were in particular mentioned e.g. by the **CZ, SK** and **LT** evaluators in the area of training as well as new forms of providing services (**PL**).
- (41) This synthesis report provides examples for innovative products and solutions in the new Member States. But it is not possible to compare the incidence of innovations, as evaluators, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures based their assessments on different criteria.
- (42) The development of innovative solutions and their testing was rendered difficult in particular by the following factors:
- Changing legislative and institutional environments;
 - Changing labour market conditions;
 - Problems of some DPs in reaching-out of target groups;
 - Low motivation of target group in participating in the projects;
 - Changing attitudes was a lengthy process;
 - Political changes at national or local levels could lower the mainstreaming potential of an innovation or even make its testing difficult;
 - In some cases, problems with a low management capacity of DPs have been named;

- The understanding of the development of innovation as a process was not always clear to DPs;
- Missing conditions of a social incubator, as pointed out by the **LT** evaluator;
- The usually missing definition of a reference situation made the follow up of the development of the innovation difficult.

The implementation of the mainstreaming principle

- (43) Only few national evaluation reports contained a proper analysis of the state of the mainstreaming process at all levels (e.g. **CZ, LT, PL, LV**).
- (44) Eight of the New Member States formulated a mainstreaming strategy or a mainstreaming planning document. Only 5 new Member States published their mainstreaming strategies on the EU EQUAL website.
- (45) The assessment and validation process of good practice differed widely across the new Member States. Differences existed in respect to:
- The actors involved in the “validation” process (National Thematic Networks or subgroups within the networks, external experts, the national evaluator, DPs);
 - The formalisation of the validation process versus acceptance of self-assessment of DPs without additional assessment;
 - The object and scope of the evaluation and validation (innovation, best innovations, best practices including the implementation of all key principles of EQUAL).
 - The evaluation criteria “mainstreaming potential” should have been already a quality criteria for the validation of innovations. But also at this stage of the process the mainstreaming potential was not systematically assessed in all new Member States.

In some Member States the selection was provided by National Thematic Networks (e.g. **MT**), by the evaluator (e.g. **PL**) in common workshops (e.g. **HU**) or through external experts (e.g. **CY**). In some Member States the focus was less on innovation but on best practice (**HU, CY**).

- (46) The Portuguese approach for the validation process of EQUAL was a model for a number of new Member States when they organised validation or best practice selection processes. The fact that this model was so widespread also shows that the new Member States needed guidance and orientation in the mainstreaming process.
- (47) The process to identify best practices or “best innovations” for mainstreaming purposes was a difficult one and the results have to be treated with caution. It seems to be obvious that the validation and selection standards were not the same across the countries. Small countries tended to be more “generous” as their number of products was much smaller. For countries with relatively low social standards it was much easier to identify

innovations for mainstreaming which fulfil at least the territorial criteria of a “national innovation”.

- (48) DPs focused on the development and implementation of dissemination activities. According to some evaluators this was linked to the fact that DPs did understand mainstreaming in the first place as the dissemination of EQUAL results.
- (49) In most new Member States we could identify mainstreaming activities based on
- Direct activities of DPs, including dissemination of results via printed documents, internet and other media and direct contacts. The DPs presented their results, usually these results have not been subject of an independent assessment process;
 - A more structured and centralised process usually at National Thematic Network level, based on validated innovations and best practices.
- (50) The composition of DPs was a crucial element for effective mainstreaming, in particular vertical mainstreaming. So mainstreaming was taking already place informally even before mainstreaming activities due to inclusive partnership structure. The importance of the involvement of strategic partners in the DPs for mainstreaming was stressed. At the same time the mainstreaming capacity of DPs was small if they did not have the right partners or did not have enough connections to the political arena to pursue vertical mainstreaming.
- (51) Dissemination activities of DPs included the production of all type of media. Evaluators in many cases took stock of the different products for dissemination. The general assessment of these activities was positive in so far as EQUAL was known in the general public, raised the awareness on discrimination and inequality and made suggestions for changes in legislation.”
- (52) The National Thematic Networks were the key players in the mainstreaming process in most of the new Member States. The roles of the National Thematic Network consisted generally in providing a platform for exchange between DPs, to identify and validate good practice, to promote vertical mainstreaming and to promote the dissemination of results.
- (53) National Thematic Networks were structured on the basis of different logics: by themes; and/or by policy fields; and/or by horizontal issues.
- (54) Evaluation reports and interviews gave a varied picture about the inclusiveness of National Thematic Networks. In general, not only DPs were participating in National Thematic Networks but also external experts and NGOs outside EQUAL. In **PL**, also target groups participated in National Thematic Networks. However, evaluators and interviewees from Managing Authorities and National Support Structures were more critical as regards the inclusiveness of DPs for vertical mainstreaming (e.g. **PL**, **CZ** and **HU**).

- (55) The National Thematic Networks were either chaired by DPs or external experts, but were not chaired by key actors in national policy making as suggested in the handbook for the implementation of EQUAL in the new Member States. No thematic network activities were reported from **EE** where National Thematic Networks did simply not exist.
- (56) To meet the challenges of mainstreaming especially for the vertical mainstreaming process some of the new Member States established additional mainstreaming groups, committees and other organizational bodies. In some cases central mainstreaming activities were contracted to external consultants (**MT**) or external academic experts (**CY**).
- (57) The mainstreaming activities can be grouped in the following way:
- (a) Meetings and working groups;
 - (b) Information materials;
 - (c) Organisation of conferences;
 - (d) Lobbying political and administrative decision makers;
 - (e) Commenting legislative projects and formulating policy recommendations.
- (58) The active involvement of the Managing Authorities in mainstreaming activities was a key success criteria, especially when the Managing Authority is part of an organisation which can be regarded as a relevant policy maker for EQUAL themes.
- (59) Vertical mainstreaming activities addressed at the key decision makers for national social policy were also decisive for mainstreaming EQUAL into the new ESF programming period. In addition to this there were some examples for vertical mainstreaming activities which had been exclusively organised to transfer EQUAL experience into the ESF programmes.
- (60) Implementation problems of mainstreaming at DP level:
- Difficulties of DPs to understand the concept of mainstreaming;
 - Difficulties consisted in the integration of the right partners for mainstreaming purposes in the DPs or at least in action 3 activities. The weak involvement of political decision makers, local authorities and the employment offices was mentioned;
 - Low capacities of DPs for mainstreaming and a too high responsibility for mainstreaming which was put on DPs;
 - Mainstreaming was difficult because of the short time frame of the programme period and delays in programme implementation;
 - Partnerships validated not actual solutions but descriptions of expected results;
 - Management problems: The **EE** the evaluator reported that many DPs partners were not aware of additional funding available for mainstreaming. In **SK** the DPs claimed that they were not aware of that mainstreaming activities are part of the EQUAL programme.

- (61) Implementation problems of mainstreaming at National Thematic Network level:
- Late start of the setting-up of the operational National Thematic Networks so the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy at Programme level started late (e.g. **CY, EE, MT, SI**);
 - National Thematic Networks were not in all cases sufficiently inclusive (e.g. **CZ**: few social partners, researchers / thematic experts);
 - Clear and feasible strategies at national level were still missing in some cases;
 - The political interest in the EQUAL results seemed to be low in a number of new Member States. Consequently, the degree of networking with the political level was low;
 - In some new Member States, there was the problem of frequent government changes;
 - Further, in **HU** it might have been problematic for the mainstreaming that EQUAL was not any longer situated within the line Ministry (Ministry of Labour);
 - The National Support Structure in **PL** stated that the strategy has been to involve policy makers early; this backfired as the policy makers that had been invited for a mainstreaming event had expected a far greater level of detail.

Assessment of Intermediate Impacts

- (62) Only some new Member States provide a comprehensive overview of impacts of EQUAL and detailed how this information was collected. For most new Member States the information on impacts is only based on our interviews.
- (63) Policy impacts in form of legislative changes or amendments to existing law were only in few cases assessed systematically by screening the relevant documents and reports to legal acts. In case no systematic evaluation was made, we received information on policy impacts from the Managing Authorities. It can be assumed that Managing Authorities or the respective line Ministry have been overlooking the development of the law system in their competence field. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to assess which influence EQUAL had for the amendments of laws and creation of new laws.
- (64) In most of the evaluation reports or during the interviews a list of examples for legislative impacts of EQUAL was presented. For some cases it was difficult to apportion the share of EQUAL to the legislative changes as it is in general a characteristic of political decision making processes that they are influenced by numerous political players and lobby groups. An isolated cause-and-effect chain is probably the exception for political decision making processes. The following policy impacts have been reported:
- (a) One clear impact of CIP EQUAL is that new target groups have become a focus of social and labour market policy. A number of adjustments to existing legislation in favour of new target groups was executed or is

planned. The examples on legislative changes concern disabled, asylum seekers but also gamblers.

- (b) The regulation of the “social economy” is another focus of legislative changes resulting from EQUAL projects.
 - (c) The reconciliation of work and family is a further main focus of legislative changes.
- (65) EQUAL had intermediate impacts not only on concrete policy areas, but the experience of the work with some EQUAL principles had also concrete impacts on political processes and on administrative capacity building in the new Member States.
- (66) In the interviews it was often stated that the political decision processes is not finished yet and that some legislative changes were expected in the near future.
- (67) The identification of institutional impacts was very difficult especially the information of impacts on the education system was often not based on a solid data base.
- (68) Most EQUAL impacts were reported on changes in the education and training system (e.g. new officially recognised qualifications and curricula; new officially recognised modes of access etc.). However, there is no reliable feedback concerning the use of such EQUAL products.
- (69) One area of impact consisted in extending the training courses and their contents, counselling targeted to schools and in setting-up curricula of new professions. Several educational and training programmes were developed in the course of EQUAL which have been utilised. However, the number of developed programmes is larger and only a few new Member States took action to preserve all the results in a structured way to support sustainability.
- (70) Impacts were reported in several new Member States concerning the use of EQUAL training materials beyond EQUAL e.g. use of this material by institutions not belonging to an EQUAL partnership or intended use by DP members after completion of the project. Examples for this are the use of training materials for asylum seekers and discriminated ethnic groups (**SK, EE**) and for the training of prison inmates or ex-prisoners (**EE, HU, LV, SK**).
- (71) The organisational impacts are the most difficult form of impacts to assess. In general in the new Member States only very few impacts on employers and human resource policy have been reported. This is due to the fact that the collection of information on changes of the policy of private companies was a difficult process. But it was also stated by evaluators and Managing Authorities and National Support Structures that there were not much impacts on companies; improvements concerning the fight against inequalities and discrimination are based on a long and often slow process.

- (72) It seems to be a general problem that private employers were not sufficiently targeted within EQUAL. This holds true for the involvement in the DPs work but also for the mainstreaming process. Examples for changes in the area of human resource policy are limited to single companies usually involved in EQUAL projects where they experienced to work with target group members and then kept these employees or continued to employ people out of this target group.
- (73) Sustainable impacts on the organisation of the employment services have been reported only exceptionally. These impacts focused on changes in the information and placement functions. EQUAL projects contributed to the introduction or improvement of internet based information services.
- (74) Creation of new institutions to fight discrimination and inequality:
- The Managing Authority in **MT** reported that a governmental agency for asylum seekers was created.
 - In **CZ**, the implementation of the career consultant institute was named
 - In **CY**, the Introduction of a certification system on “gender equality” of companies was reported to have been based on EQUAL findings.
- (75) One of the decisive impacts of EQUAL was its contribution to the development of a “social economy”. The social economy structures especially in the form of NGOs were less developed in most of the new Member States compared to EU average. This was especially emphasized in the reports from **PL** and **CZ** but this finding was confirmed in the interviews for all new Member States.
- (76) The EQUAL experience had definitely strong impacts on the new ESF programming period in the new Member States. As planned EQUAL principles have become a central element in this programming period for most of the new Member States.
- (77) Some Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and national evaluators in the new Member States stressed in their reports and in the interviews the direct impact of EQUAL on the beneficiaries of the programmes. We summarised these findings in the report. Nevertheless, the EU wide evaluation team considers that impact on beneficiaries should be regarded as an outcome of the innovative products and in this respect should be regarded as quality criteria but not as a political, institutional or organisational impact. The same holds true concerning the sustainability of EQUAL projects. Numerous examples were mentioned regarding projects that would continue without EQUAL funding. We do not consider the sustainability of projects as an impact in the sense of this impact assessment. However, we also summarised these findings of the national evaluation reports in this respect.
- (78) The effects of the financial and economic crisis in most of the new Member States of the European Union are even more dramatic than in the majority of EU15. The economic basis of these countries is still less developed, the financial basis of the private companies is weaker and the financial scope of

the public sector is much smaller than in EU 15. Despite the fact that in the crisis the EQUAL target groups would even need more support, due to the financial constraints new projects and programmes have almost no chance to be realised in the context of the crisis.

Value-added of EQUAL

- (79) The assessment of “value-added” implicates that EQUAL might have delivered products that another programme or mainstream policy would not have produced. This question refers to the two main characteristics of EQUAL, the EQUAL principles and the laboratory approach of the whole programme. The answer to this question is mainly based on interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures, but we also analysed the national evaluation reports concerning the general assessment of the EQUAL principles and the laboratory approach in this respect.
- (80) The general assessment of EQUAL in the new Member States was in most of the new Member States definitely very positive. A typical answer from evaluators and Managing Authorities was that they have been very critical in the beginning but then often surprised at the constructive and positive results of EQUAL.
- (81) Managerial capacity building was taking place at the level of the Managing Authorities and the National Support Structures (in particular in case there was low staff turnover). The Managing Authority in HU stressed in this context “new ways of management of social projects”, e.g. the use of implementation guides. They also called it “the higher education of European management”. Moreover, the idea of “learning networks” including openness and confidence were revealed as value-added. The Managing Authority in LT stressed that EQUAL was connected to the challenge to provide a new quality in social programmes. This high quality also resulted from the fact that EQUAL created a “competitive environment” (LT Managing Authority).
- (82) The laboratory function of EQUAL was in some new Member States definitely a new experience which offered the opportunity for new solutions, new target groups and different thinking. There are a number of examples in EQUAL that things are “done for the first time” and that in EQUAL some target group were subject to specific measures for the “first time”.
- (83) Despite many shortcomings in this respect – so f. ex. the analysis of the innovation process clearly demonstrates that the “testing” of innovative solutions was often not organised in a satisfactory way and the fact that the laboratory approach caused a lot of problems and frictional losses - the value-added of EQUAL was nevertheless connected to this laboratory function.

- (84) Raising awareness for inequality and discrimination was also in the view of the Managing Authorities in **MT**, **PL** and in **CY** a decisive value-added of EQUAL. In this respect the awareness for special target groups (e. g. asylum seekers) was emphasized.
- (85) Negative assessments concerning the overall programme focus on the negligence of the cost-effectiveness of products. The **PL** evaluation team criticised the relatively low appraisal of efficiency and cost-effectiveness of products. Also the **LT** evaluation team stated in its report that due to the lack of the economic evaluation of innovations, it is unclear to what extent the innovations are cost-efficient.
- (86) Another central point of criticism concerned the administrative burden, EQUAL was often seen as somewhat “overloaded” with too many objectives at the same time and in most new Member States the sustainability of EQUAL products and long-term impacts were not guaranteed. In the new Member States one has to take into account that there was not much experience concerning the management of European projects.
- (87) The implementation of the partnership principle was regarded as the most important value-added of EQUAL. In particular the practice of sharing social responsibilities in the Central and Eastern European new Member States was innovative and most useful. EQUAL made an important contribution to the development of the social economy sector in these countries.
- (88) The implementation of transnationality was generally perceived as bringing value-added. There was a real interest in learning from other countries’ experience.
- (89) The empowerment principle was always in some respect “neglected” within EQUAL. There are some clues that the empowerment principle showed tangible results - in the reports there were some concrete examples of empowerment of target groups e. g. disabled in **LT** and **LV**. Nevertheless, in the assessments and reports not much attention was addressed to the empowerment principle.
- (90) Only few interviewees referred to “gender mainstreaming” when asked for value-added. Despite the difficulties, the lack of awareness and many shortcomings which were described in the **LT** report (as also in other reports), the evaluator stated that EQUAL promoted a better understanding of the gender principle. Also in **CZ** EQUAL contributed to more awareness on gender issues according to our interviews.
- (91) The value-added of the mainstreaming principle was based on the key concept of EQUAL to develop and test new things and then disseminate and mainstream the result into practice and generate political, institutional and organisational impacts. The idea of change and improvement was very ambitious. This approach made EQUAL a project with higher standards than others. Although some observers would have expected more concrete

results the value-added of EQUAL at least consisted in raising public awareness for discrimination and inequality issues

- (92) The value-added of EQUAL concerning evaluation is somewhat ambivalent. Evaluation in the intensity as it was done in EQUAL was definitely new for most of new Member States. During the EQUAL process we could observe that in some Member States the evaluation requirement was taken up very seriously and used in a very constructive way. In **CZ** it was obvious that EQUAL made a decisive contribution to the development of an evaluation culture which was a quite new field of expertise for social policy. The same positive finding holds true for **LT**. But we also made the observation that evaluation was not always seen as an instrument which could be used in a constructive way by the Managing Authorities. So the value-added of EQUAL is that the new Member States at least made first experiences with evaluation.

Recommendations

Recommendations made by national evaluators

- (93) Recommendations made by National Evaluators with relevance for the current and future ESF programme periods have in common that all of them focused on improvement of the implementation of the principles. So most of the EQUAL principles should be kept as an important element in future programmes but more guidance and more management capacity is needed.

In particular they recommended for EQUAL:

- Improving the implementation of the empowerment principle (e.g. **EE**, **CZ**; the **CZ** evaluators recommended a consequent participation of target groups at all phases of the project);
 - Improving the implementation of gender mainstreaming (e.g. **CZ**, **EE**, **MT**);
 - Increasing the effectiveness of transnational cooperation (e.g. by ensuring that all DP partners get appropriately informed about the results of transnational activities (**CZ**) or by motivating beneficiaries through an involvement in transnational activities (**LT**);
 - Foster the involvement of strategic actors for mainstreaming purposes and
 - Developing ways on how to conduct self-evaluation (e. g. **CZ**);
 - Further recommendations formulated towards DPs called for organising work in a way that DP partners share responsibility and do not only fulfil their precise task like a simple service provider (e.g. **CZ**, **LT**).
- (94) Recommendations on the improvement of the monitoring system at Programme level were made: E.g. the **PL** evaluator suggested improving the monitoring of costs at project levels in a way that would allow for distinguishing the expenditure on preparing prototype systems and the current cost of providing services to ultimate beneficiaries. Without this it

would be impossible to assess the cost effectiveness of the solutions created. In general terms it was recommended by some national evaluators in their final evaluation reports to include cost-benefit assessments in future evaluations (e.g. **PL, CZ, LT**)

- (95) Increasing guidance activities towards DPs: Evaluators stressed that the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures needed to provide more guidance and individual consultation to DPs (e.g. **PL**), in particular as regards implementation of self-evaluation (e.g. **CZ, PL**), the development and implementation of innovations (e.g. **LT**) and the implementation of mainstreaming (e.g. **EE**).

Recommendations made by the EU10 evaluator

- (96) The intensity and quality of the monitoring and evaluation process differed widely across the EU10 Member States. Therefore, we recommend for EU-wide evaluations of European Programmes to assure the application of common minimum standards, including a common structure, common evaluation criteria as well as common qualitative and quantitative indicators in order to assure comparability and reliability of results achieved at local and national levels. In case the evaluation is organised at national level, the Member States should agree on binding evaluation criteria and indicators.
- (97) Self-evaluation by those implementing European and national projects should represent a management tool and should be considered as such. In this respect promoting self-evaluation is likely to increase the management capacities of the different organisations implementing projects. However, EQUAL has shown that guidance on how to conduct self-evaluation is needed.
- (98) Self-assessments should as much as possible be crossed with the views of other - and best with external - actors. This is particularly important in the context of the evaluation of innovation.
- (99) The conduct of case studies including on-site-visits and intensified interviews with a multitude of actors involved in the design and the implementation as well as with beneficiaries is an important source for understanding processes. It is advisable to use case studies in addition to documentary analysis (and surveys) in particular in the context of qualitative evaluation.
- (100) The definition of a frame of reference for the evaluation of innovation is necessary: this should include the scope of innovation, defining the benchmark, etc.

- (101) The Managing Authorities should make sure that they can devote enough resources to follow-up and provide guidance for the implementation of European funded programmes.
- (102) There is a general tendency in the Member States to centralise the management of European Funds and other European projects in one Department or a Governmental Agency. This is probably more efficient concerning administrative processes but it creates a certain distance between the administrative level and the operational level. The commitment to European Programmes and projects in the line Ministries is weaker if they are not regarded as “their” projects. This is a general challenge for the design of projects and programmes. To strengthen the commitment of the line ministries the EU10 evaluator recommends focusing more on the interests of the national policy.
- (103) The development of a cooperation culture based on shared responsibility takes time but it is valuable to be pursued in future Programmes.
- (104) In case of inexperienced partners and new forms of partnerships or partners which have no experience in working together it is necessary to have a common understanding concerning the role and responsibility of the different partners and to implement clear decision structures. The partnership approach does not contradict the implementation of clear decision making processes and a clear distribution of responsibilities.
- (105) The EU10 evaluation team shares the view expressed in particular from the **CZ** and **LT** evaluator that a strong involvement of public authorities in the partnerships is a precondition for success. The same holds true for the recommendation to limit the number of partners to those who effectively play a role for the project implementation.
- (106) In case of the introduction and testing of new and somewhat sophisticated concepts as e.g. the empowerment principle more guidance at all levels would bring better results. The EU10 evaluation team recommends to promote furthermore the empowerment idea but to make it more operational and understandable.
- (107) In addition we recommend more support in case the target groups are highly marginalised and have no organisations defending their interests. We also recommend the encouragement of administrative bodies and public authorities to develop a more positive attitude towards the empowerment of marginalised groups. More concretely, it is recommended to promote the involvement of target groups in the development and implementation of measures. This is valuable for both sides: it permits the target group to have a voice and it helps to improve the products delivered by projects as the beneficiaries bring in their knowledge on the needs and problems of the specific target group and might help in reaching-out the whole target group.

- (108) In case transnationality is implemented in the current Programme period, it should be borne in mind that the preparation phase of transnational cooperation is crucial: the choice of the “right” partners with regard to the potential for learning as well as the work programme should be thoroughly prepared. The organisation of peer reviews and study visits are useful and organisations implementing projects should foresee enough financial resources for this type of exchanges.
- (109) EQUAL has shown that the implementation of gender mainstreaming, which should be regarded as a horizontal objective in many national and European projects, is most difficult as there is little awareness about gender inequalities.
- (110) The different types of organisations running projects will still need intensive guidance on gender mainstreaming. This will be important for the current and next programming phases. It is recommended to use the EQUAL gender mainstreaming guide elaborated by the European Commission in the context of EQUAL, also in the current ESF – Programming phase.
- (111) There is no doubt about the need for innovation in social policies issues. There are a number of examples that EQUAL produced innovative products of high quality and brought awareness to the problems of new target groups. So the EU10 evaluation team recommends continuing to focus on innovation in EU programmes.
- (112) The analysis in this report showed weaknesses concerning the validation process of the quality of innovations and the selection process of the best practices. We would strongly recommend to spend more effort on the validation of the quality of innovations.
- (113) In case the development of innovative solutions are going to be funded, it is advisable to strengthen mainstreaming processes at all levels by trying to involve as many political actors as possible (including social partners) at the national and at the regional level.
- (114) It is recommended to develop a mainstreaming strategy well at the beginning of a project or programme. This includes also a clear defined process on the identification of good practice as well as on the creation of a good practice database which should remain on the internet (or other accessible media) well after the completion of the Programme.
- (115) It is recommended to check whether networks structures already exist, where the presentation and discussion of projects and their results can be discussed and shared with other organisation. New network structures, such as thematic groups following the approach chosen in EQUAL, should only be set up if no adequate network structures already exist. We support the recommendation of the **CZ** and **PL** evaluators that the setting-up of

regional networks is useful, where no adequate network structure already exists.

- (116) It is recommended to determine the methodology for the impact evaluation at an early stage of the project life cycle in order to determine the methodology, e.g. if there is a need for following-up participants or beneficiaries after completion of the measure or the project it might be necessary to agree on this at the beginning of the Programme.

1. The Evaluation of EQUAL in EU10 - Methodological Approach of the Synthesis Report

1.1. The Objective of the Synthesis Report

The overall objective of the contract “Synthesis of the Evaluation Reports of the EQUAL Programmes in the EU10 Member States submitted to the Commission within 2006 and 2009” is to allow for a continuation of synthesis work of national evaluation reports.

The ongoing synthesis of the evaluation of EQUAL in EU10 is based on two evaluation contracts. The first evaluation contract was mainly concerned with the evaluation of action 1 of the second Round of EQUAL. That evaluation was part of the final synthesis evaluation report 2000 – 2006 submitted by Bernard Brunhes International in cooperation with the ICAS Institute and Economix Research & Consulting. Volume 1 of this report was concerned with the EU15 and volume 2 provided a synthesis for EU10. That report focused on the appropriateness of strategies, the management and implementation systems as well as on transnationality.²

The evaluation contract for the present synthesis of the national evaluation reports in EU10 was contracted to Economix Research & Consulting. Two evaluation phases of national evaluations were taken into account³ and two synthesis reports have been drawn from the analyses of the national evaluation reports in the new Member States. The first report was approved by the European Commission in February 2008. The present document is the second and final report of the synthesis of the national evaluations in EU10. In this synthesis of the national evaluation reports in EU10 also results from the previous report have been updated.

In the first report under this contract the focus was set on the implementation of the partnership principle, the empowerment principle, transnationality, gender mainstreaming and on first results of the development and implementation of innovations. This focus corresponded to the implementation stage that EQUAL reached at that time. The second evaluation focused on innovation, mainstreaming and impact. In addition to this the final assessment of the value added of EQUAL is presented. This final synthesis of the national evaluation reports will form a good point of departure for the ex-post evaluation. Furthermore in the concluding chapter recommendations – based on national evaluations and the synthesis of EU10 – are formulated. This is expected to add to the value of lessons already learned and allows better exploiting the results of

² Jacques Dahan, Isabelle Darmon, Nicola Duell, Sandrine Gineste, Gildas Niget (2006): The EU-wide evaluation of the Community Initiative EQUAL 2000-2006. Vol. 1, Vol. 2, Vol. 3, Vol. 4 Final Report. Report prepared for the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

³ Although, there is no longer an obligation for submitting evaluation reports of EQUAL at national level, it remains a requirement for the 10 new Member States.

EQUAL in the preparation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the current and the future ESF programmes.

1.2. Tasks of the Synthesis Report

The main task of the EU10-wide evaluation is to synthesise the national evaluation reports. According to the terms of reference, the synthesis of the available national evaluation reports should have been done following the structure given by the Standard Terms of Reference for the Independent Evaluators for EQUAL in the new Member States as well as the “Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007 - 2008” elaborated by the working group on EQUAL evaluation published on the Web Site of the European Commission - EQUAL unit. This proposal reflects a consensus between the Member States. Unfortunately, the evaluation reports in the EU10 Member States did not always follow the recommendations formulated in the proposal. In addition, the Standard Terms of Reference point to the need to address specific cross-cutting issues in case these are issues and challenges specified in the CIP. As these cross-cutting issues have not been dealt with in the national evaluation reports, the synthesis on cross-cutting issues could not be made.

On the grounds of the past experience with the EU-wide evaluation of EQUAL, and following the Standard Terms of Reference as well as the Common Proposal for the evaluation in the New Member States, the synthesis of the national evaluation report focuses on the overview of the monitoring and evaluation system put in place in the new Member States, the implementation of the partnership principle, the implementation of the empowerment principle, the implementation of transnationality, the implementation of gender mainstreaming, the implementation of innovation, the implementation of mainstreaming, the assessment of intermediate impacts, the assessment of value-added and the synthesis of recommendations of national evaluators and recommendations of the EU10 evaluator.

The Terms of Reference for the EU10 evaluation specifies that the key findings of the national evaluation reports in the new Member States were to be complemented by information provided by the Managing Authority and National Support Structures. This task was fulfilled, although it was not possible to supplement in the interviews all missing information and substitute for major lacks in the national evaluation reports.

The final synthesis report of 2009 is a comprehensive report. Information which had been provided in the 2007 synthesis report was updated when necessary and possible.

1.3. Methodology of the Synthesis of the EU10 Evaluations

Analysis of national evaluation reports

The national evaluation reports represent the key source document for this contract. In the terms of reference for the synthesis of EU10 evaluation reports it was foreseen that this final report was to be delivered by the 30th of September 2008. However, interviews with the Managing Authorities and the National Support Structures as well as the partnership meeting in Brussels on 29th of June 2007 and 15th of December 2008 have shown that this time schedule needed to be adjusted. In the end, the deadline was set for the 30th of June 2009.

The following national reports were received by the beginning of April 2009 and were therefore included in the analysis performed for the 2009 synthesis:

Availability of national evaluation reports

	<i>First Evaluation Phase</i>		<i>Second Evaluation Phase</i>	
	<i>Availability in English</i>	<i>Report made available / Comments</i>	<i>Availability in English</i>	<i>Report made available / Comments</i>
CZ	Full Report	December 2006	Full Report	October 2008
CY	Executive Summary	April / May 2007	Preliminary Executive Summary	April 2009
EE	Full Report	August 2006	Executive Summary	October 2008
HU	-	NO REPORT (see second evaluation phase)	Executive Summaries: First report Final report	February 2008 March 2009
LT	Executive Summary	December 2006	Executive Summary	December 2008
LV	Executive Summary	October 2006	Executive Summary	June 2008
MT	Full Report	October 2006	Full Report	October 2008
PL	Full Report	July 2006	Only polish version	August 2008
SI	Executive Summary	June 2007	Full Report	July 2008
SK	Executive Summary	January 2007	-	NO REPORT

The final national evaluation reports have been made available to the EU10 evaluator between July 2008 and April 2009. Only **LV** presented their final national evaluation report, including an English summary, by the initial deadline that is June 2008. All other countries handed in their reports with a delay. **SK** did not prepare a national evaluation report within this time span. The Managing Authority stressed that this was a consequence of an oversight on the part of the Managing Authority due to insufficient capacities to fulfil all EQUAL-related tasks. Managing Authority stated that they decided to start the final evaluation in spring 2009 and wanted to complete it by June 2009.

According to the Managing Authorities, the main reasons for submitting reports later than planned were as follows:

- The national EQUAL evaluation process was intensified;
- Mainstreaming (action 3) started quite late in the new Member States, so the evaluation process was also started with delays;
- Changes concerning EQUAL staff and political decision makers;
- Insufficient management capacity.

In **CY** a short English summary providing an overview of the progress of EQUAL was prepared at the occasion of the evaluation interviews with the EU wide evaluator. In **CY** action 3 started very late, an extension of EQUAL was agreed until the end of June 2009, thus the evaluator claimed that the moment of the interviews (April 2009) was too early for the final national evaluation report.

SI produced a 244 pages English report. Unfortunately this report is only partly based on an evaluation of EQUAL in **SI**. The report consists basically on a compilation of interim reports of DPs. In addition, it was not possible to schedule an interview with a Managing Authority representative in **SI**. Findings in the present report are based on interviews with representatives of the National Support Structure and with the national evaluator.

The availability of English versions or English summaries was not always satisfying. Extremely short English summaries were provided by **CY** (4 pages) and **HU** (6 pages).

Contact with national evaluators

Direct contact with national evaluators served the purpose of discussing their evaluation methodologies and the content of their reports. The EU10 evaluation team appreciated very much that in some new Member States full reports were available in English. In-depth interviews with national evaluators were nevertheless usually carried out even when English language versions of the reports were available.

Contact with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures

In all EU10 Member States interviews were conducted with Managing Authorities and National Support Structure. These interviews took place between March and July 2007 in the first evaluation phase and between October 2008 and April 2009 in the second evaluation phase.

The purpose of these interviews was as follows:

- Comparing evaluation findings with the views of the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures;
- Covering issues not included in the evaluation reports;
- Updating information.

The interviews were helpful in overcoming some of the problems resulting from different time-frames of national evaluation reports.

Additional Desk research

The comparative analysis of the results of national evaluations was supplemented by limited desk research in order to ground our comparative analysis in the context of the current changes in labour market and social inclusion policies and structures.

In particular, we took into account for our analysis of the national evaluations the analysis of the CIP programming documents. Furthermore, sources like the gender equality reports and additional evaluations prepared in the national context were used.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation of EQUAL in the EU10 Member States

2.1. Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Monitoring System

2.1.1. Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Monitoring System at Programme Level

Purpose of the monitoring system

Interviews with the Managing Authorities revealed that monitoring system primarily served the purpose of financial control in the majority of the new Member States and played a limited role for the management of the Programme's activities or in the light of implementing the key principles.

One reason for this strong orientation towards using the monitoring system for financial control, laid in the requirement of the financial control system itself, which was generally binding a high level of time resources of all actors (Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and DPs). The main tool used for these financial control purposes were monitoring reports.

In what follows, we analyse in a greater detail how the various instruments of the monitoring systems, particularly monitoring reports, on-the-spot visits as well as meetings with DPs and the indicator system. These instruments were used in compliance with financial control requirements and for supporting Programme management.

Use made of monitoring reports and financial control

The monitoring reports seemed to have been primarily used for financial control instead of controlling the implementation of the key principles. This was criticised by a number of evaluators:

- The main problems stressed by the **CZ** evaluator referred to the emphasis of monitoring for financial controls. The Managing Authority had to apply a hundred percent checking. The evaluator explained that the Managing Authority and in particular the National Support Structure were concerned with checking monitoring reports, checking applications for payments and checking of applications for change instead of working on the contents of the reports and the implementation of the principles.
- Criticism expressed by the **LT** evaluator went in the same vein. The evaluation team explained in its report that the primary goal of the administrative system in Lithuania was to control eligibility of expenditure. To this end a multilevel control system was in place. This system absorbed many resources. The evaluation team stated in its report that the administrative bodies tried to avoid process errors and as a result spent more effort and time than expected. It was further stated that the administrative system was not suitable for monitoring and managing the achievement of programme objectives.

- Also the **PL** evaluation report stressed DPs dissatisfaction with the heavy burden of financial reporting, which impaired DP's capacity to manage their substantive responsibilities.

During the interviews with the Managing Authorities and the National Support Structures it became clear that a heavy administrative system represented a major problem for many new Member States. Not only was the reporting time consuming for DPs, but also for Managing Authorities and National Support Structures as they concentrated their resources on checking financial claims for compliance and eligibility, and formal completeness of monitoring reports.

However, the **MT** evaluator complained that quarterly monitoring reports were too short and contained too little information (a maximum of 300 characters was allowed).

In **HU** the Managing Authority modified the structure of DP's quarterly reports in spring 2007, so that DPs had to report now more on the implementation of key principles, in particular on their transnational activities. Changes in the structure of reporting were also necessary as the capacity of the National Support Structure to deal with the reports was too limited.

Use of on-the-spot visits

On the-spot-visits were used for both – financial control as well as for monitoring the implementation of the key principles. EU10 Member States differed in how they balanced these two objectives. A number of new Member States had used other monitoring tools like on-the-spot **visits** for Programme Management purposes as the face-to-face contact with DPs allowed discussing issues concerning the implementation of the key principles. Nevertheless, according to our interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures, on-the spot visits were also used for financial control purposes.

The use made of on-the-spot visits can thus be summarised as follows.

(a) Monitor the implementation of the activities and of the key principles

The following two examples show how on-the-spot visits can be used for monitoring and support the implementation of key principles:

- On-the-Spot visits offered the occasion to check the implementation of the key principles and the quality of the activities (e.g. in **CY** the National Support Structure used a checklist including the implementation of the key principle). In case the National Support Structure discovered a problem in the implementation or the quality of the activities this was discussed with the DP in order to find a solution.
- In **SK**, interviews revealed, that on-the-spot visits were used also to check the implementation of the key principles. In this respect the visits

were also used to give the DPs active guidance, e.g. on gender mainstreaming.

(b) Control of financial and technical implementation

On-the-spot visits were also used to check the financial and technical implementation:

- In **HU**, audit visits were carried out.
- In **LV**, on the spot visits were made. In the first year, all 10 DPs were visited. There was a check-list concerning mainly the progress of activities and the implementation about publicity/communication. The main purpose of these visits was to check whether progress reports were correct. On this ground suggestions for improvement were made. Sometimes bilateral meetings were arranged. The implementation of key principles was generally not checked, this was treated in the national evaluation report.
- In **MT**, on-the-spot visits were used mainly to control whether the public procurement rules had been followed and whether expenditures were eligible.

Meetings with DPs

In some new Member States, a system for communication with the DPs was set up, e.g. in order to discuss problems in the implementation of activities. Examples of the different models of communication with the DPs put in place are given below:

- In **CY** monthly meetings with the DPs were held. This seemed to be appreciated by DPs, as the survey results showed that DP were assessing the operations of the EQUAL managing and monitoring system as “very well” or “well” defined and specialised.
- In **HU** the Managing Authority organised once a month a “DP day”. At this date, DPs could come and discuss their questions and problems directly with representatives of the Managing Authority. The questions mainly referred to financial issues.

Indicator systems

In general, evaluators did not assess the relevance, reliability and efficiency of the indicator systems used in the monitoring systems. The **CZ** evaluation report represents an exception in this respect.

Example: assessment of the quality of the indicator system in the national evaluation report

The **CZ** evaluation team analysed the reliability and relevance of the indicator system, as foreseen in its terms of reference for the interim report. This analysis revealed shortcomings as the “... planned values of some indicators are unrealistic. Some achieved results are not believable. This happened due to the unclear definition of indicators and associate problems in measurement.” It became further clear that the purposes of the indicator system – to provide information for the financial and technical control on the one hand and to follow up

the content and the quality of activities on the other hand – needed to be looked at in a separate way.

The evaluator therefore proposed to reorganise the Monitoring Committee in two working groups: one concerned with the implementation of the key principles and another one focusing on the technical implementation of the Programme.

The **CZ** Managing Authority had reacted on some of the recommendations and reviewed the unreliable indicators and introduced some more qualitative indicators.

According to Managing Authority in **HU**, a debate on the most relevant and effective indicator system unfolded. The Managing Authority prepared several sets of indicators, but according to our interviewee, indicators should be developed further. In particular it was discussed with the line Ministries whether quantitative indicators for impact assessment should be used (which the Managing Authority representative would have been in favour). The line Ministry was against it. At the same time, each National Thematic Network had developed own indicators. From the National Thematic Networks the Managing Authority got a list of 30 indicators.

We can conclude from these examples, that the question about the most suitable indicator system was far from being resolved. Some new Member States were improving their monitoring system and were developing more qualitative indicators in order to assess the implementation of the key principles.

2.1.2. Problems with the Use of Monitoring Systems

National evaluators cited the following main problems:

- (a) **Payment delays** were widespread in many new Member States, although important improvements had been made since the last evaluation (e.g. in **SK**, **CZ**). However, in the case of one new Member State, severe problems with the payments occurred as some expenditures were considered as being not eligible after the payments had been made (**SI**).
- (b) Evaluators as well as Managing Authorities themselves perceived the **administrative processes** as being not efficient from the Programme's implementation view point. For instance, in **HU** and **CZ** public procurement regulations and their subsequent modifications caused severe problems regarding the appointment of evaluators and experts. In **MT**, we were told that DPs had to apply public procurement rules for their own activities – including for small amounts - which rendered the implementation of DP activities in **MT** complicated.
- (c) **Administrative requirements** at DP level (including technical and financial reporting, application of public procurement rules) were consuming important time and human resources. (e.g. **LT**, **MT**, **PL**, **CY**, **SK**).

- (d) **Tensions** between organisational cultures at public sector, private sector and NGOs were observed, which was seen as problematic in some cases at Programme management level and within partnerships (e.g. **LT, SI, PL**). At DP level we could already observe differences in working culture between the different types of organisations in the EU-wide evaluation report of 2006.
- (e) In **CZ** Managing Authorities and National Support Structures had to face the problem that some DPs handed in **monitoring reports of poor quality** or did not meet the deadlines. Due to the general lack of experience at DP level this problem was not specific to **CZ**.

These findings apply to the initial phase of EQUAL. In the final national evaluation reports a significant learning process is reported in most new Member States. The organisation became more efficient and financial problems have been solved, the DPs learned to cope with the administrative burden and were able to concentrate more on the content of EQUAL.

Unfortunately, in some new Member States the organising capacity to run such a complex Programme was not sufficient and in some Member States the staff requirement within the Managing Authority and National Support Structures was underestimated. The number of DPs and the size of the whole programme were too large for the given administrative capacities.

2.2. The Implementation and Use of Self-evaluation

The level of implementation of self-evaluation

In 2007, the incidence of the implementation of self-evaluation by DPs was quite varied⁴:

- (a) In a half of the new Member States, all or almost all DPs were implementing self-evaluation (**CY, LT, EE, and LV**) or at least most DPs did so (**SI**).
- (b) Self-evaluation was only carried out by a share of the DPs (**CZ, HU, PL, SI**). Their shares varied from 40% (**PL**) to 51% (**HU**).
- (c) In **MT** and **SK** self-evaluation was finally not conducted.

⁴ The stage of implementation of self-evaluation in 2007 is interesting because it indicates whether DPs were able to set-up ongoing self-evaluation.

Guidance for self-evaluation

DPs got detailed **guidance** in some new Member States. This guidance was organised in different ways:

- (a) Guidance through **the evaluator** (e.g. **CZ**, where first an internet portal was established in 2006, in 2007 guidelines and a seminar was prepared by the evaluator).

Example: Guidance for self-evaluation provided in CZ

In CZ guidance to DPs needed to be intensified. In 2006, the evaluator did set up an internet portal for self-evaluation, which also served as a discussion forum. In December 2006 the self-evaluation portal contained 25 questions and answers and some documents / guidelines in different languages (source: CZ interim evaluation report). Overall, the evaluator stated that this instrument was not very effective and many DPs did not use or were not even aware of its existence (although they were informed by the National Support Structure) and active discussions did not take place so far. At the same time DPs answered in the survey that they needed to know more about self-evaluation methods. Furthermore, the evaluation team stated in its report (December 2006), that DPs mainly used quantitative indicators but did not use qualitative methods as such. This is why in early 2007 additional measures to explain DPs the purpose and methods of self-evaluation were implemented. A seminar was organised by the evaluation team and a handbook drafted.

- (b) Guidance through **experts** (e.g. in **CY** an external expert instructed DPs at an early stage of the Programme on how to conduct self-evaluations).
- (c) In some Member States self-evaluation **guides** were produced (e.g. in **HU**, in **LT** and in **LV**). But we were told during our interviews that DPs had difficulties to understanding and using these documents.

We can conclude from the national evaluation reports and the interviews that the DPs needed specific guidance as self-evaluation was a very new concept in the new Member States. One major difficulty for the implementation of self-evaluation was the lack of understanding of the purpose of self-evaluation. This was certainly linked to the missing evaluation culture in the new Member States. The communication towards DPs about the purpose of self-evaluation was therefore crucial.

Self-evaluation methods

In principle self-evaluation at the DP level could be organised in three different ways:

- (a) **Internal self-evaluations**

DPs could carry out an internal self-evaluation, meaning that the DP is itself carrying out the self-evaluation (e.g. through participants surveys). Some Managing Authorities were in favour of internal self-evaluation (e.g. **PL** and **LV** Managing Authorities as they thought the self-evaluation was for internal use in the first place implying the evaluation should be conducted internally; the **EE** Managing Authority preferred it due to cost consideration). It was perceived in this case that only an internal evaluation could be useful for the internal use of the self-evaluation.

There was a danger of mixing up monitoring and self-evaluation. This was explained in the **EE** evaluation report, as DPs provided the same type of information in the self-evaluation reports than in the monitoring report and the difference between the two was not clear to DPs.

(b) **External self evaluations**

DPs could appoint an external evaluator. This model was chosen only by few DPs in the new Member States.

In **SK** DPs did apparently not foresee any budget for external self-evaluation. The **PL** evaluator stated that it was difficult to find qualified evaluators.

(c) **Using both models: internal and external self-evaluation**

Both methods, external and internal self-evaluations were implemented in some cases (e.g. **CZ** evaluation report).

These findings clearly demonstrate that there was an uncertainty concerning the organisation of the self-evaluation process. Finally, the criterion for the selection of the self-evaluation method was often based more on financial reasons than on methodological considerations.

2.3. Implementation and Use of National Evaluations

2.3.1. Comparison of Time Frame of the National Evaluations

Basically, at national level three evaluation reports were foreseen. The first national evaluation reports mainly referred to action 1 and were analysed in the context of the first evaluation contract for the EU-wide evaluation of 2006, Vol. 2, cited above. Consequently, these reports are not subject of this synthesis report.

Two further evaluation reports, named here the interim and the final evaluation reports were elaborated mainly during the implementation of action 2 and 3. These reports are the basis for the two phases for this EU10-wide synthesis of the national evaluations.

As the following tables clearly indicate, at the national levels the evaluation time frames varied considerably.

Time span of field work for national evaluation - Interim report

	2/06	3/06	4/06	5/06	6/06	7/06	8/06	9/06	10/06	11/06	12/06	1/07	2/07	3/07	4/07
CZ															
CY															(*)
EE															
HU	(**)														
LT															
LV															
MT															
PL															
SI															
SK															

(*)In the case of CY, the evaluator had started the evaluation of EQUAL in November 2006. As there was no evaluation report for 2005, the evaluators' first task consisted in evaluation action 1. Nevertheless, the updated evaluation report made available to the EU-wide evaluator in April 2007 contained also first results on the implementation of key principles, although this was to be deepened over the next months.

(**)In the case of HU, it was not possible to appoint a national evaluator in time due to new public procurement rules, which substantially lengthened the process for appointing an evaluator). So the 1st report was finalised only in February 2008. The results of this report are now integrated in this final synthesis report

Time span of field work for national evaluation - Final report

	10/07	11/07	12/07	01/08	02/08	03/08	04/08	05/08	06/08	07/08	08/08	09/08	10/08	11/08	12/08	01/09	01/09	02/09	03/09	04/09
CZ																				
CY																				
EE																				
HU																				
LT																				
LV																				
MT																				
PL																				
SI																				
SK																				no report

2.3.2. Comparison of Methodological Approaches and Instruments of the National Evaluations

Significant differences also existed regarding evaluation methodologies. Tools used by the national evaluators in the new Member States included:

- (a) The analysis of **monitoring reports** (except in **CY** where self-evaluation reports were used instead⁵).
- (b) The **ECDB database** was used only rarely. The **CZ** evaluator analysed ECDB data in its interim report. However, quality control checks made by the evaluator showed that this data was not very reliable. The **PL** evaluator used it only for his first report, but not for subsequent.
- (c) **Self-evaluation reports** of DPs were used in a systematic manner only in **CY** and **LT**. In most other new Member States self-evaluation reports did not exist or only few DPs had prepared such reports (**CZ, MT, SI, SK**). In **LV** self-evaluation reports were not analysed as they were considered to be only for internal use for DPs or were perceived as lacking in quality and reliability (**PL**).
- (d) **Interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures** were carried out in all Member Countries. Moreover, interviews were conducted with members of Steering Committees (e.g. **CZ, MT** and **SK**).
- (e) **Interviews with representatives of National Thematic Networks** were realised only in a few cases (e.g. **CZ** and **SK** interim report).
- (f) **Interviews with experts** were in general not conducted. During the interviews it became clear that access to external experts was very difficult in most new Member States. These experts would expect to be remunerated and would be reluctant to give information for free. Some evaluators performed interviews with experts of the DPs (e.g. **MT, LV, SK**). These experts were in general DP members (e.g. university staff, officials, etc). However, in our view this might help to understand deeper what the DP is doing, but it was pointed out by evaluators (e.g. **CZ**) that DP members did often not have an overview whether their innovative approaches had already been tested in other regions or sectors. In addition, during the interviews it was further explained to us that in particular in small new Member States, the number of potential experts was rather limited.
- (g) In **EE** interviews with 115 (out of 487) participants in mainstreaming events, primarily conference attendees, were conducted for the final report. In **EE** 91 employers were randomly selected from a nation-wide

⁵ The self-evaluation reports are quite comprehensive while monitoring reports in CY are rather short and do not provide much detailed information)

data base of private firms' human resource departments. The idea was to get data from a „control group“, i.e. firms not targeted by EQUAL projects.

- (h) In **LV** additional interviews were also carried out with politicians, which we believe to be a valuable approach. In **EE** interviews with 11 political decision makers were carried out.
- (i) **Surveys** of DPs were conducted by the **CZ, PL, SI, EE** and **CY** evaluators. It needs to be stressed, that with the exception of the **PL** and **EE** evaluation, only DP leaders were surveyed. The previous EU-wide evaluation reports, however, showed that surveying DP partners and beneficiaries was very useful in order to get more complete information and more balanced assessments.
- (j) **Case studies** were carried out in addition or instead of surveys:
 - In addition to the surveys case studies were implemented in the two larger new Member States (**PL** and **CZ**). In the case of **CZ** (interim report), about 40% of DPs were selected for case study work. Similarly 40% of DPs were studied in **PL** (20% for the interim and additional 20% for the final report). DPs were selected using the thematic area, regional spread and the size of the budget. In **PL**, the evaluation team adopted a quota selection method. The resulting sample was balanced so it included partnerships from each theme, weak and strong performers, all types of lead partners, etc. Case studies contained detailed analysis of projects' progress' implementation of key principles, including a thorough examination of how innovative products actually are; organizational issues, including staff turnover; cost per beneficiary analysis and many other issues. Cases studies constituted the key component of the evaluation process in **PL**.
 - In **SK** although the total number of DPs was high, only case studies, but no surveys were carried out for the interim report. Regarding the sample selection, the Managing Authority was asked to propose weak-performing and strong DPs.
 - In **LT, LV, MT** all DPs were selected for case studies. This was possible due to a low number of DPs in these new Member States.
 - In **EE** surveys were not supplemented by case studies but focus group interviews were organised; each DP participated in these interviews.
 - In **SI**, the evaluator conducted semi-structured interviews with DPs' representatives, including both those responsible for projects' content and those responsible for DP internal self-evaluation. Before interviews were carried out, all documentation available from DPs was studied.
 - In **CY** no case studies were carried out.

Due to the small size of most new Member States case studies were often presented for each single DP (this is what the **EE** evaluator called an "individual approach"). This approach is logical in case the total number of DPs is low. Nevertheless we think it is important to synthesise the findings and to provide an evaluation at Programme level – which was done in some but not all the cases.

Although it was not possible in small new Member States to carry out anonymous case studies, evaluators introduced some elements in this direction: e.g. by not reporting the names of the interviewees. Some evaluators stressed during the interviews that this was important in order to get more open and frank responses to the questions.

In the context of the case studies, interviews with beneficiaries were only rarely conducted. In our view interviews with beneficiaries would have allowed to gather a deeper insight of the DPs activities and a more balanced view.

Because EQUAL's evaluation reports often relied on qualitative data, case studies shed light on processes that otherwise would not have been well understood. In our view case studies should have been used more extensively; interviews with the largest feasible sample of all type of actors and program participants are particularly valuable.

Finally, it needs to be stressed that the choice of the methodological instruments and in particular the combination of different instruments not only depended from the country size but also from the evaluation conditions (length of the time for fieldwork as well as the budget, which both varied significantly between Member States).

In our view a combination of different sources is crucial, in order to get a balanced view. Moreover, in case self-assessment items were introduced in questionnaires, the evaluator should be aware of possible bias generated by the type of respondent.

2.4. Use of National Evaluation Reports

On the basis of the interviews with Managing Authorities' and National Support Structures' representatives we can conclude that national evaluation reports were used for two purposes:

(a) **Communication about the Programme**

In the case of **LV**, our interviewee explained that the communication about the programme has been an important purpose of the national evaluation report.

(b) **Support to Programme Management**

It is not clear in all cases to what extent national evaluation reports had been used to adapt and improve Programme Management. On the grounds of additional interviews we know that recommendations were discussed (e.g. **LT**) and that some recommendations were taken over (e.g. in **CZ**). In **CZ** the evaluation report is regarded by the Managing Authority as an important source with valuable recommendations.

It should be added, that Managing Authorities and National Support Structures in a few new Member States wished that national interim evaluation reports could be more analytical and thus give more insight on

the implementation of the Programme. In a few cases, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures explained that evaluation reports were too descriptive.

In contrast, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures in a few new Member States seemed to make little use of the evaluation reports for the Programme implementation.

Staff turnover may have reduced the interest in using national evaluation as a programme management tool. When evaluation reports did not contain an in-depth analysis of key principles, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures did fill in the gap as they were by themselves following-up the implementation of the key principles (e.g. in **CY**, **SK**).

2.5. Changing Attitude Towards Evaluation

The evaluation of public activities policies was a quite new instrument in the new Member States. So it is not surprising that national evaluations were sometimes a hampered process and were seen in some countries with certain reluctance. And this attitude did not much change in some new Member States. Nevertheless, major differences appeared as to the level of resources devoted to the national evaluation.

The appointment of a new evaluator was often an indicator that there was concern about the evaluation quality. It was stated that in the new Member States often inexperienced evaluators were frequently used, especially to support the self-evaluation process (e.g. **CY**). The **PL** national evaluator noted that DPs complained about the shortage of professional evaluators.

On the other hand it can be stated that some Member States initiated additional evaluation projects within EQUAL with focus on special issues. In **CZ** additional evaluation reports, on “gender issues” and “transnational co-operation“, have been produced. In **MT** a “Tracer Study on the beneficiaries of the projects funded through the EQUAL Community Initiative” was commissioned.

3. The Implementation of the EQUAL Key Principles in EU10

3.1. Introduction: The implementation of EQUAL in EU10

The evaluation of the key principles' implementation is one of the key objectives of the EU10 synthesis report. Let us summarize most important parameters of EQUAL's design and execution in the new Member States. In the above mentioned EU-wide evaluation report of 2006 the appropriateness of strategies as well as the management and implementation systems of EQUAL in the new Member States was analysed. Moreover, the report included the analysis of DPs and transnational activities of DPs at the beginning of EQUAL.

The number of DPs which operated in the different Member States proved to remain quite stable in most of the new Member States during the whole EQUAL programme period. Only in **CZ** the number of DPs significantly increased over the life of the EQUAL programme.⁶ The following table shows the development of the number of DPs between April 2006, July 2007 and the latest available information given during the final interviews with Managing Authorities (end of 2008 - April 2009).

Number of DPs in the new Member States

CIP	April 2006	July 2007	terminated as planned or were still active at the moment of the evaluation
CY	7	7	7
CZ	59	58	72
EE	13	13	13
HU (*)	39	39	38
LT	29	28	28
LV	10	9	9
MT	5	5	5
PL	107	99	99
SI(**)	26	20	17
SK	101	99	98

Source:

2006: ECDB and EU-wide evaluation 2006, final report, Vol. 2. 2007 and latest information from MA and NSS.

(*) 1 DP had to give up because of illegitimate expenses.

(**) 20 DPs were selected for action 2 out of 26 having been selected for action 1. During action 2, 3 DPs had to give up because of illegitimate expenses.

⁶ The **CZ** Managing Authority provided the information that new projects were realised by newly created DPs (created across the existing DPs or by organisations which entered EQUAL only for action 3). As additional calls were shaped merely for mainstreaming of already developed products, projects could mainstream their products developed either within existing EQUAL DPs or partly or completely outside of EQUAL.

Thematic Focus of EQUAL in the New Member States

It is useful to recall the features of the thematic focus and the political priorities set in EQUAL. Not all of the 9 thematic fields defined in EQUAL were covered in EU10, not even by Member States with a large number of DPs, e.g. **PL** and **SK**. This is most probably related to the fact that those new Member States with a small number of DPs were advised in the guide for the implementation of EQUAL in the new Member States to focus only on a few themes.⁷ **CZ** represented an obvious exception as all thematic priorities were covered⁸:

- 4 new Member States (**CY, EE, LT, LV**) focused on 3 thematic priorities, which were often the same (theme 1A – Access and return to the labour market, 4G – Reconciling family and professional life or 4H - Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation and 5I – Socio-economic integration of asylum seekers).
- 3 new Member States (**HU, MT, SI**) selected 4 thematic priorities but with different choices from one new Member State to another.
- 2 new Member States (**PL, SK**) covered 5 themes out of the 9 proposed.

Two themes, 1A and 5I, were systematically addressed by all CIPs. On the basis of the CIP analysis of the EU-wide evaluator, it seemed that some new Member States, particularly those focusing on few priorities (**EE, HU, LT, LV, MT**), looked for complementarities with the Single Programming Document (SPD). For example, entrepreneurship and adaptability were not chosen in **EE** because they would have overlapped directly with SPD's coverage. Theme 1A, on the other hand, corresponded to priority 1.3 - inclusive labour market of the SPD but the approach was different, with EQUAL focusing more on testing innovative methods rather than on the immediate employability of the target groups. According to some national evaluation reports of 2005, theme 5I (asylum seekers) would not have been selected as a main priority, if it had not been compulsory. Indeed, other priorities seemed more strategic to some new Member States.

Labour market inequalities are approached in most of the new Member State by target group rather than by theme (**LT, HU, MT, EE, CZ, SI**): Socially marginalised individuals, ethnic minorities (mainly Roma), refugees-immigrants (Russian), disabled, unemployed people, long term unemployed, young people, women, low skilled, older workers, 'excluded people' (drug addicts, homeless, offenders). Employment quality was mainly addressed in relation to gender equality and in the context of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

⁷ European Commission, DG Employment and social affairs: EQUAL in Practice. Handbook for the implementation of EQUAL in the new Member States.

⁸ Jacques Dahan et al. (2006): EU-wide evaluation of EQUAL 2000-2006, Vol. 2

A majority of new Member States intended to focus EQUAL on those target groups underdeserved by existing policies. The EU-wide evaluator's analysis of the target groups featured in the 10 CIPs revealed that groups most often selected were: women (all CIPs), followed by disabled people and excluded people like drug addicts, homeless, offenders and ex offenders (9 out of 10), young people and ethnic minorities (8), long term unemployed and older workers (7). In addition specific groups such as employees threatened by redundancies (**PL**), lone parents (**CY, MT, PL**) have been identified.

In most cases, the main factors of inequality pointed out referred to the lack of education and skills deficits. This focus on individual deficits and problems provided a justification for the emphasis put on employability in EQUAL. But institutional deficits as well as mentalities were also pointed out in some new Member States.

3.2. The Implementation of the Partnership Principle

3.2.1. Methodological Approach in National Evaluation Reports

Evaluation tools

The main evaluation tools used for assessing the efficiency and the effectiveness of partnerships were case studies as well as surveys consisting of self-assessment questionnaire items.

Scope of evaluation

In general, national evaluators analysed the partnership structure and the dynamics of partnership formation. This allowed for assessing the relevance of the partnership structure. For the assessment of the effectiveness of partnership structures, the way partnerships were implemented was analysed in some cases. Major differences between the national evaluation reports consisted in the depth in which the implementation of the partnership principle was analysed. This chapter refers mainly to the national interim evaluation reports submitted in 2006 and early 2007 as well as to interviews carried out with the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures. Only in the case of **CZ**, the partnership principle was evaluated again for the final national evaluation report.

3.2.2. Relevance of the Partnerships and the Role of the Different Partners

Partnership formation

Partnership formation at an operational level is a new issue in most new Member States. Nevertheless, partnerships were built on former cooperation when possible.

This occurred particularly often in **CY** and **MT**. DPs were built within existing networks and in the case of **MT** it was explained by the Managing Authority that the partnership principle had led to a formalisation of partnerships at the operational level.

The **CZ** evaluator explained in its interim report that previous long-term cooperation between partners was the basis for the partnership formation. Further partners joined in relation to the regional or thematic relevance.

Although, there were examples of previous working contacts, the implementation of the partnership principle was generally regarded as an innovation in itself in all new Member States except in **MT** and **CY**.

An overview of the partnership composition had been provided in the 2006 EU-wide evaluation report (Volume 2). In the following we therefore take-up only the evaluation results as well as the results of the interviews showing the different roles of the partners within the DPs for the development of innovation and mainstreaming.

Education and training organisations

In all new Member States training and education institutions played an important role in the DPs. In **HU**, **SI** and **LV** about 20% of the DP partners were education and training organisations.

In **LT** formal and non-formal education institutions participated in 20 (out of 28) DPs. The project implementation involved four pre-school educational entities, eight non-university institutions of higher learning and vocational schools, seven universities of Lithuania (some of them participated in several projects), and more than ten institutions of informal education, nine regional labour market training centres.

Social partners

In **MT** and **CY**, the social partners were represented in nearly all DPs. This is linked to the high unionisation rates in these two countries and the tradition of tripartite social dialog. According to the **CY** evaluator, the role of employees and employers representatives was to ensure information diffusion within the own organisation and contributed to awareness raising of employers. In the case of **MT**, the evaluator explained that social partners played an important role with regard to vertical mainstreaming as they were generally very much involved at national level. In **CY** social partners were also lead partners in the DPs, for example the Employers Federation and the Cyprus Workers Confederation played such role.

In contrast, in all other new Member States, social partners tended to be underrepresented. This is certainly linked, at least in **CZ**, **PL**, **HU**, **LT**, **LV** and **EE**, to the less important role of the social partners at national level in these countries, which is also reflected in a low union density.⁹

Private sector companies

National evaluators often criticized the weak involvement of private companies. A higher involvement would have been useful, as it would have created a deeper understanding of the problem as well as it would have helped searching for possible solutions, as argued for instance by the **LV** evaluator. The EU-wide final evaluation report of 2006 showed that also in the old Member States the involvement of the private sector was considered as low and difficulties in attracting the private sector to engage in projects dealing with inequalities and discrimination were named.

⁹ Cf. Lado, M. (2003), Industrial relations in the candidate countries, Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.
Welz, C. and Kauppinen, T. (2003), Social dialogue and conflict resolution in the accessions countries. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Governmental organisations

The participation of governmental organisations was regarded as very useful, particularly for mainstreaming purposes:

- According to the **CY** Managing Authority, the role of government or para-public bodies was to contribute to mainstreaming the results into innovative policy action. To explain this, a “small country effect” was cited. Reference was made in the CY context to a favourable. The condition for a positive “small country effect” seems, however, to be linked to political stability.
- In **MT**, the lead organisation was in most cases a governmental institution. This was regarded as being very promising for mainstreaming, as the very fact that experts within the public administration are implementing themselves the project might lead to a higher acceptance of their proposals by the government.
- In **EE** the evaluator stressed that DPs would have benefited from having a public sector organisation on board.
- In **HU** it has to be stated that the involvement of public sector organisations was comparatively weak. In only two DPs (out of 38) public sector organisations were lead partners. Managing Authority emphasized that the capacity of public authorities was insufficient to play a more active role in EQUAL due to many other projects (Human Resources Development Programme – ESF, etc.) and ongoing reform processes in this policy area.
- In **LT**, the participation of Ministries within DPs has been regarded as very beneficial for mainstreaming.
- According to the **LV** evaluator DPs had enough partners (governmental institutions, municipalities) for mainstreaming. The representative of the Managing Authority cited the example of a DP active in the area of victims of trafficking, where the Ministry of Interior and Justice was a partner. This allowed for an early start of mainstreaming activities.
- It is noteworthy, that in **SK** about one third of the partners were Public Employment Services (according to the National Support Structure).

Research organisations

The assessment of the value of research organisations’ participation was not uniform:

- According to the **SI** evaluator research organisations were widely believed to have provided a valuable contribution to DPs’ work.
- In contrast, **PL** evaluators stressed a relative passivity of the research organisations. It was explained that research organisations are under-

funded and often participate in programs such as EQUAL to support their routine work.

- In some new Member States (e.g. **HU, SK, CZ**) research organisations were believed to have been underrepresented

Local governments and other local institutions

The local level was represented within the DPs through the participation of local authorities and other local actors and in this respect EQUAL was regarded as useful, although the local level could be even more involved.

- In **LV** and **SK** we were told that local governments were important DP members.
- In the view of the **HU** Managing Authority, the partnership principle is probably quite effective for Roma, whose local representatives were partners in local DPs.
- According to the **LT** and the **CZ** evaluators, the lead partners were mainly located in the capital, but local networks were in many cases involved. At the same time, both evaluators stressed that more projects should have been carried out in the rural areas.

In this context it needs to be stressed that the regional disparities have been particularly significant in **CZ, SK, PL, HU, LT** and **LV**. These disparities deepened in the context of economic transition. Furthermore, problems in rural areas were linked to emigration and ageing. Therefore, a high involvement of the local level would have been highly important for a Programme that seeks to combat discrimination and reduce inequality.

Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were key actors in social inclusion policies. Their involvement in DPs was generally high. During the interviews, we were told that small organisations, in particular small NGOs, tended to be more innovative (e.g. **SK, LT**). These findings correspond with the results of the EU-wide evaluation of EQUAL round 1 in the old Member States. The argument was that larger organisations, in particular public organisations, were used to implement policies in a given framework and were not used to search for new solutions. The cooperation, however, with the established public and private organisation was crucial as these were more pragmatic and might indicate the limits and feasibility of proposed ideas.

3.2.3. Conditions of Effectiveness of the Partnership Principle

The following conditions for effective implementation of the partnership principle could be disentangled:

- (a) **Tradition of networking and working in partnerships**
Partnerships were working well in the case of **CY** and **MT** as there was a culture of multi-partnerships and in particular of tri-party social dialogue at both national and local/sector levels (employers, trade unions and the

State). Although, partnerships could be regarded as new at the micro level, and thus the operational and project level, the partners knew each other well from other working contexts. Partnerships at the micro professional level were regarded as a further development of the macro-level partnerships and were regarded as beneficial.

According to the **CY** evaluators' survey the vast majority of DPs assessed cooperation among their partners as very good (the same holds true in **PL**). The Greek expert explained that the partnership principle worked out better in **CY** as compared to Greece (where partnership was regarded as an innovation in itself).

(b) **No tradition of working in partnerships but contacts were built on former contacts**

In most other new Member States partnerships cannot depart from a tradition of negotiations and partnerships. According to the **EE** Managing Authority, those DPs which were built on "old" partnerships were considered as "safer".

(c) **Task sharing and mutual commitment**

It became clear from the interviews that the different organisations were very much in competition and it was more difficult for them to cooperate (e.g. **HU**) or often acted only in their own economic interest (e.g. **CZ**). Against this background a condition of success laid in task sharing. The effectiveness of the partnership principle depended on how far it was possible to share a common responsibility for a project. It was argued by our interviewees that EQUAL offered the possibility to engage a learning process in this direction (e.g. **HU**). Thus, according to our **HU** interviewee, task sharing in the context of EQUAL was better than it used to be. The **CZ** evaluator stated on the basis of case studies, that in the case of some partners, who would rather only fulfil a task, there was a problem with comprehension of the partnership principle. This trend was mostly noticeable in the case of commercial subjects and public authorities. According to the evaluator, non-governmental non-profit organisations (probably thanks to their character) comprehended the partnership principle better.

Furthermore, the importance of mutual commitment was shown in the **PL** evaluation report (based on survey results): "According to the respondents the effectiveness increased mostly due to the commitment of a variety of institutions and organisations with a range of experience types and different approaches to the solving of complex social issues. This was particularly important at the project planning stage. Some of the respondents thought that this helped a holistic approach to the problem."

(d) **Widen the knowledge base**

Partnerships were effective in case the different knowledge of the partners could be used and served as a widened knowledge base (as explained e.g. by the **LT** evaluator). Clearly, sharing the knowledge e.g. of universities, institutions experienced in implementing projects and knowing well the legal conditions and administrative processes as well as

of target group representatives' knowledge on the precise needs, brings the different dimensions a project has to consider. It was also argued that the partnership structure helped to have access to expert knowledge, which would otherwise be more difficult (e.g. as explained by the **HU** interviewee).

3.2.4. Internal Governance Structure of Development Partnerships

Not all national evaluation reports addressed this topic. Based on the information we could gather most new Member States DPs opted for a centralised management model. Evaluators pointed out different aspects which constituted the prevalence of a centralised organisational model. These encompassed mainly:

- The distribution of financial resources;
- The position of the lead partner;
- The involvement of partners in decision making;
- The involvement of partners in project design and project implementation.

National evaluators generally analysed the impact of the governance structure on the implementation of EQUAL.

Models for governance structure of DPs

The following 'models' were identified based on classifications used by the different evaluators.

(a) **Distribution of financial resources and highly centralised partnership structures**

In the following we give the example of a typology defined by the **LT** evaluator who distinguished between a 'classical' organisational structure and a 'centralised' organisational structure, which we however would classify as 'highly centralised' model.

Classification of partnership structure developed by the LT evaluator

The **LT** evaluation team stated in its report: "..... the partnership principle was applied in Lithuania through both the classical organisational structure and centralised structure: In a classical organisational structure, each partner receives a portion of the common project budget necessary for the partner to complete the relevant activities. Each partner who carries out the activities incurs project-related expenses. The responsible partner reimburses the expenditure of other partners after it receives payment from the Implementing Body. Key decisions are made in project management committees set up by the partners. The committees meet regularly and their decisions are recorded in the minutes. By contrast, under the centralised model all parties taking part in a project are employed by the responsible partner's organisation during the project implementation. All expenditures provided for in the budget were incurred by the managing partner only. In such an organisational structure, employees of the managing partner become activity co-ordinators, project administrators and financial experts. Other partner organisations do not receive any budget for the activities, and equality of project partners is based on the mutual agreement – as a possibility to work in a monitoring group or project

management committee. Each of these structures has its own advantages and disadvantages. Centralised structures are more frequently found in development partnerships where the leading partner is a financially strong public authority or science and education institution able to ensure timely funding for the project and, at the same time, strict, bureaucratic but safer internal administrative system. For a number of projects it can be a vital issue. Although centralised management structure is a positive thing in terms of administrative activities, the structure may be flawed in terms of the specific project area. Project implementation becomes increasingly similar to a project pursued by a single organisation where key decisions including on attracting various partners, selection of activities and budget appropriation may be adopted unilaterally.”

In **HU**, such a high degree of centralisation was avoided by the financial system put in place: DP partners were paid directly by the Managing Authority.

- (b) **Position of the lead partner and centralised governance structures**
Independently from the way financial resources were distributed, some evaluators stressed the usefulness of having a “strong” lead partner. It goes without saying that a strong position of the lead partner contradicts in our view a model of equal participation of partners in decision making.

During the interviews, it was explained to us that a management model where the lead partner had a strong position was positive and contributed to the success of the DP (e.g. **SI**, **LT** and **EE**).

- (c) **Equalitarian partnership structures**
In contrast to the centralised management models described above, the governance model of partnerships in **CY** was interesting as it was quite equalitarian: it was fixed in the DPs agreements that all partners have the same rights and votes. Also the beneficiaries had a voice in the DP. Nevertheless, in reality the lead partner had in general a stronger position.
Interestingly, the **PL** evaluator pointed out that partnerships led by private firms worked differently: There held fewer meetings but they were more democratic. Partnerships led by research organisations did hold more meetings but tended to channel the financial resources to the lead partner. Those led by a public administration met most frequently but were also more hierarchical.

Strength and weaknesses of highly centralised, centralised and more equalitarian governance structures

The **LT** evaluator explained how the lead partner’s strong position may benefit small organisations: “In projects, partnership is often based on a benevolent agreement in which the leading partner plays the role of the leader and the partner is legally responsible for the project outputs. Most other partners understand their role in the project as completion of their relevant activities. Concentration of influence around the managing partner is caused by several circumstances. Firstly, as in other projects supported by the Structural Funds,

larger organisations with better financial and administrative standing more often use the possibility to receive European Union assistance. Weaker organisations, at the same time, even with better ideas, have fewer possibilities as they find it relatively difficult to submit a project application (they usually hire consultants) and later project implementation may become risky as it is quite difficult to meet the requirements of the administrative system. Therefore, the partnership principle enables weaker organisations to take part in the DP activities, while a large part of the financial burden is taken by the stronger organisation, which is not necessarily the project innovation generator.” However, the evaluator also pointed to risks linked to the **LT** model, as partner’s financial capacity was an important guarantee of the project’s functioning since advance payment options in **LT** were made available only to those organizations which provided insurance or bank guarantees issued on the basis of the applicant’s assets or financial indicators. According to the evaluator this fact could also reduce the partnership status of organizations with good ideas but not necessarily sufficient administrative capacity or capital.

Similarly, the **CZ** evaluation team explained in its report that the prevalence of a centralised management model was due in most cases to the administrative requirements of running a project. Another reason was that decentralised management was more expensive and complicated. According to the evaluator partners participated in decision making in small partnerships, while in large partnerships only the key partners were involved. Decisions were always made at the management level of the project.

Only in one case it was argued that the organisational structure did not affect the effectiveness of Programme implementation, but that the quality of management was decisive.

Based on survey results, the **PL** evaluator could not discern a major impact of the organisational structure on the effectiveness of the partnership principle: “Respondents to a questionnaire noted that the operational efficiency depended mostly on the quality of management rather than on the type of partnership organisation.” However, the responses to the questionnaire showed that the type of partnership might affect the quality of management: “Some of the respondents, especially representatives of the administration and education organisations, thought that partnership management was more difficult than in a conventional hierarchical system. The commitment of partners, measured by a timely and successful completion of tasks varied, which sometimes affected an efficient implementation of the programme. In partnership projects decision making procedures were longer, just as was the project response time. Additionally, this was a new project approach that Polish partners had still much to learn about.”

3.2.5. Benefits of the Partnership Principle

As already stated right at the beginning of this chapter, the implementation of the partnership principle could be regarded as an innovation in itself in most new Member States. It was therefore considered in these cases by evaluators and Managing Authority representatives as a value-added of EQUAL (see chapter 5).

In the case of **CY** and **MT**, working in partnerships was not new at a macro level, but it was at the micro, project-related, level.

A number of evaluators pointed to both benefits and problems while implementing the partnership principle. The general assessment, however, was that the benefits outweighed the costs.

The following types of (potential) benefits of implementing the partnership principle as compared to the implementation of mainstream projects were identified by the evaluators or were stated during the interviews:

The first three types of benefits referred directly to the implementation of EQUAL. The last three types of benefits can be regarded as more general benefits.

(a) **Contribution to innovation**

- The inclusion of small organisations provided a higher potential for innovation, as it is the small organisations which often bring in the new ideas (e.g. **SK**, **LT**);
- The implementation of the partnership principle generated new knowledge and improved access of the DP members to expertise.

(b) **Contribution to mainstreaming**

- The involvement of public and para-public organisations was beneficial for vertical mainstreaming;
- The partnership principle allowed for horizontal mainstreaming (as expressed in the case of **CZ** and **MT**, but this might also be true for other new Member States).

(c) **Improved management**

- There were potentials for improving the management of projects as the probability to find solutions to problems increased with the number of partners (e.g. **SK**). Note, however, that other evaluators and Managing Authorities pointed to efficiency losses linked to the management of partnerships (e.g. **PL**).

(d) **Building-up of networks**

- Contacts and networks might be sustainable after EQUAL (e.g. **LT**). This was important, in particular in MS, where networking still needed to be developed.

(e) **Improving cooperation at the local levels**

- The implementation of the partnership principle was beneficial to improve cooperation at the local and regional level.

(f) **Strengthening the NGO sector**

- Capacity building for small organisations, in particular NGOs, was taking place (e.g. **SK**, **LT**). In the **CZ** case the Managing Authority and the evaluator stressed the important contribution of EQUAL to the “building up of a social economy”.

3.2.6. Implementation Problems of the Partnership Principle

The following problems for the implementation of the partnership principle and limitations were pointed out:

(a) **Difficulties in achieving mutual commitment and sharing responsibilities**

As already shown, in most new Member States, in particular if a tradition to work in partnerships was missing, the sharing responsibility and cooperation still represented a problem.

As already stated, the **CZ** evaluation team pointed out in its final report that not all types of partners really understood what the partnership principle implied. In particular commercial entities and public authority bodies would understand the partnership principal as just fulfilling their task and not as a joint responsibility. The CZ evaluator saw a basic problem in the fact that decision making and to account for these decisions fell apart in some partnerships, so the risk of irresponsible decisions occurred.

Also in the case of **EE**, it was argued that the role of new partners from private organisations was sometimes limited to the provision of services like renting rooms rather than being genuine project partners. As already mentioned, our **HU** interviewee pointed to a lacking culture of sharing tasks and of taking over joint responsibility. Even in the case of **CY**, where the partnership principle was globally assessed as working very well, the evaluator states, that it was a problem when partners only focused on the implementation of their precise tasks they were asked to. According to **HU** Managing Authority, contracts between DP members needed to be changed in order to realise more task sharing.

(b) **Differences in working cultures**

Cultural problems between public and private sector organisations were pointed out (e.g. **LT** evaluator, **SI** evaluator, **PL** Managing Authority).

(c) **Conflicts between partners**

Conflicts between partners were mentioned. They mainly referred to the distribution of funds (e.g. **PL**). In case of **HU**, these conflicts were anticipated and the Managing Authority was paying the DP members directly and was not leaving this responsibility to the DP leader.

(d) **Insufficient competencies of partners**

The **EE** evaluator pointed to problems in case of late discovery of insufficient competencies of some partners.

(e) **Insufficient financial, technical and human resources**

Scarce financial resources and lack of human resources as well as of technical infrastructure in some DPs generally represented a problem. In the case of **CY**, according the survey conducted by the evaluators, about 42% of the respondents claimed that the funds available could only

modestly contribute to the projects' targets. In case of **SI** delays in payment and the claiming back of payments which were already processed hindered DPs to perform their planned activities. As already stated delays in payments represented also a problem in other new Member States.

(f) **Administrative burden**

As already mentioned in the previous Chapter, a further problem for the effective running of the DPs consisted in the **high administrative** burdens.

(g) **Staff fluctuation**

In the case of **SK**, **staff fluctuation** within the DPs was regarded as a problem by the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure.

(h) **Partnership size**

Problems were also mentioned in the case of small partnerships (**EE**, **SK**). In particular in **SK**, the total number of DPs was markedly higher than in other new Member States and the size of the DPs in terms of budget was quite low, which led to inefficiencies in the view of the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure.

3.3. Implementation of the Empowerment Principle

3.3.1. Methodological Approach in National Evaluation Reports

Differences in the evaluation of the implementation of the empowerment principle depended on the way the principle specified in the programme, was understood by the National Support Structure as well as by the evaluators. The evaluation of the empowerment principle was mainly carried out in the interim national evaluation reports of 2006 and 2007 and only exceptionally the implementation of the empowerment principle was followed-up in the final national evaluation reports (e.g. **CZ**, **LT**).

The notion of ‘empowerment’ was understood in 3 different ways:

(a) **Capacity building of DPs**

According to the **CZ** national evaluation interim report, initially, the “empowerment” principle was understood by the Managing Authority as capacity building of DPs with the view of implementing further ESF projects. It seems that the understanding of empowerment has evolved since then and has included more aspects.

Capacity building of DPs and DP members reflected the understanding of the **EE** evaluator.

(b) **Participation of partners and targets groups**

In this case empowerment was understood in the sense of a widened partnership principle. The focus was set on the participation of the different kind of actors, partners and target groups, in the different stages of the project.

The **LV** evaluator analysed both the empowerment of partners as well as the empowerment of target groups. For the final national evaluation, the **CZ** evaluators analysed the inclusiveness of partnerships with regard to empowerment as well as the participation structure in the decision-making process.

(c) **Empowerment of target groups**

The **PL** National Support Structure understood empowerment as participation of target groups in Programme design. In this respect EQUAL was regarded as contributing to building new paradigms in policy making.

For the final national evaluation, the **CZ** evaluators based large parts of its evaluation on the analysis of target group involvement in the different phases of EQUAL and the correlation between this involvement and the probability of the DP of having validated innovations as well as on the influence of the involvement on the implementation of mainstreaming

activities. Interestingly, the **CZ** evaluators included in their evaluation an analysis of the target group involvement in SK and the UK¹⁰.

It needs to be stressed that the understanding of the 'empowerment' principle posed substantial problems in some cases. Thus, the **SI** Managing Authority explained during the interview conducted in 2007 that it understood empowerment principally as information campaigns in the media so that those discriminated know whom to contact to get help. In **LV**, there was a problem of translation at the beginning as empowerment was translated in the sense of "delegation".

Finally, one evaluator pointed to the following problems encountered for evaluating the implementation of the empowerment principle. The **LT** evaluators stated in their interim report: "So far, the administrative system had no leverages or systematic monitoring enabling to measure the implementation of the empowerment principle. In the absence of clearly defined objectives and output indicators as well as the targets of principle implementation at the project or programme level, it is not clear if the principle is realised at all and, if yes, to which extent and how the principle is able to reduce social exclusion."

In the interview with the **SK** Managing Authority (conducted in 2007) it was stated that the terminology empowerment was vague and therefore could not be made operational.

3.3.2. Models of Implementation of the Empowerment Principle

National evaluators explained that DPs had difficulties to understand the concept (e.g. **LT**). This confirms the results of the EU-wide evaluation of Round1 for the old Member States.

Consequently, only in a few cases defined models of implementation of the empowerment principle could be identified. In the following we present the results of evaluators having analysed the participation of target groups in decision making as well as those who based their assessment on a wider definition of the empowerment of target groups.

(a) Involvement of target groups in decision making

- For its final national evaluation report, a survey carried out by the **CZ** evaluator showed that in nearly half of the DPs some form of involvement of target groups in DPs activities was carried out. The evaluators provided some examples of the form of involvement of target groups in decision making. These examples included the following areas and forms of involvement (which in our view not always indicate involvement in decision-making but in activities which may influence decision making): participation in development and the verification of training material, in the evaluation of project activities,

¹⁰ For the UK, the CZ evaluator could base the overview on target group involvement on the national evaluation reports carried out for UK-GB. However, in the case of SK the CZ evaluator had to carry out a number of interviews as no evaluation report dealing with the evaluation of the empowerment principle was available.

analysis of target group needs by means of a survey, gathering suggestions for improving the services delivered by DPs and participation in good practice monitoring. Furthermore, target groups participated in working groups of the large DPs (and therefore it seemed that their involvement was higher in large DPs). The **CZ** evaluator stated that the interest of target groups in involvement in DPs' work increased over time.

- Similarly, the **LT** evaluator pointed out mediated involvement of the target groups in decision-making through DP steering committees (where NGOs representing the target groups act as mediators), participation in project management and direct involvement of the representatives of the target groups in the working groups.
- In **MT** target groups representatives were partners in the DPs. Also, in one particular project, one member of the target group was involved in the administration of the project itself. In **CY**, beneficiaries were systematically involved in decision making (according to the National support Structure).

(b) **Empowerment of target groups**

Empowerment of target groups goes further than including target groups in decision making and relates to the active involvement in different phases of the project as well as in capacity building of the target groups. In the following the examples of empowerment of target groups as assessed by the **LV** and the **PL** evaluators are presented and stated by the **SK** Managing Authority.

In the case of **LV** the empowerment of partners and target groups were assessed as successful. The evaluator identified the following empowerment activities of the target groups at DP level: capacity building of the target groups (e.g. product and service receivers of the pilot projects, training, internship, social and professional rehabilitation, creative laboratories, etc. and their assessment); presenting their opinion and needs in surveys and "self-organizing" activities of the target groups. The following methods of empowerment of the partners within DPs were listed (in addition to the involvement of target groups in decision making): exchange of project related information on regular basis; good communication between the project steering group and the project partners as well as training of the partners.

The **PL** evaluation team gave an example of the way target groups were empowered: DPs allocated a significant proportion of their budget to serving ultimate beneficiaries, conducted broader analyses of beneficiaries' needs and invited them to participate in fulfilling different project functions. The evaluators assessed the results of implementing the empowerment principle positively: "According to survey results ... we can clearly see a higher efficiency of projects which treat the idea of including ultimate beneficiaries in project work seriously ... With regard to the effectiveness ratio, the trend is clear and shows that the more open the partnership is to the participation of ultimate beneficiaries, the further it advances along the road to developing attractive products."

In **SK** EQUAL did not much focus on the implementation of the empowerment principle as the concept was not clear to them. Nevertheless, in the interview two examples for successful empowerment have been provided:

- Training ran by former trainees in the framework of the programs for the Roma people.
 - In the mother's centres project beneficiaries were involved in advocacy activities.
-

Some DPs were implementing the empowerment principle by involving target groups as a matter of fact but not on the grounds of a concept or a strategy (e.g. **LT**).

3.3.3. Benefits of the Empowerment Principle

In some countries (e.g. in **HU**, **LT**) Managing Authorities and evaluators acknowledged that the term "empowerment" was perhaps not understood or understood in very different ways and this did not much change during the whole EQUAL programme. Nevertheless, the process of empowerment was a matter of fact and showed tangible and sustainable results in all new Member States. These results consisted in the following:

(a) **Empowerment of target groups**

- Sustainability of DP projects in which target groups are involved in the implementation of the activities;
- Target groups became "interest groups";
- Establishment of new target groups in the social support system;
- Awareness raising for discrimination and exclusion of social groups.

(b) **Contribution to the development of innovations**

Furthermore, the implementation of the empowerment principle had a positive impact on the development of innovations. The articulation of the needs by the target groups itself and the involvement of the target group in the design of activities increased in many cases the quality of the products and services and contributed in that way to the development of innovative products (as e.g. explained in the **CZ** final evaluation report). It may also have helped to better reach-out highly marginalised target groups and improved in this respect the conditions of project implementation.

(c) **Contribution to the partnership principle**

The positive contribution of the empowerment principle to the partnership principle in terms of scope and inclusiveness was stressed by **CZ** evaluator.

(d) **Contribution to mainstreaming**

The assessment of the contribution of the empowerment principle to mainstreaming was more varied. The **LT** evaluator stated empowerment was not very successful during the mainstreaming process. However, the **CZ** evaluator assessed the contribution of the empowerment principle

positively, as the involvement of target group representatives helped to transfer EQUAL results to the organisations of the target groups. The different assessment might therefore be based on the already existing level of organisation of the target group in interest groups.

3.3.4. Problems with the Implementation of the Empowerment Principle

In addition to the difficulties a number of DPs had to understand the concept, the implementation of the empowerment principle was difficult or impossible in case the target groups were highly marginalised and had no organisations defending their interests (e.g. as explained by the **MT** interviewees). Furthermore, the **CZ** evaluator criticised that the Managing Authority was not requiring the involvement of the contracting authorities, in particular administrative bodies, which co-fund the relevant activities and were key mainstreaming actors for the process of developing and implementing innovations.

The **CZ** evaluator further argued that the implementation of the empowerment principle was too complicated for DPs if it required participation of target groups in all project phases. Furthermore, some types of organisations did not have experience in working directly with the target groups. But it was also acknowledged in the **CZ** interim report that EQUAL provided reasonable time for learning. So it is to note that progress had been made between round 1 and round 2 of EQUAL.¹¹

¹¹ It is recalled that already the 1st round of EQUAL was implemented in CZ in the context of PHARE.

3.4. Implementation of the Transnationality Principle

3.4.1. Methodological Approach in National Evaluation Reports

Evaluation tools

Questions concerning the implementation of transnationality were introduced in the surveys and case studies. As we have already seen, in most cases the questions were only addressed to lead partners. This limits of course the analysis of the benefits of transnationality and the analysis of the effectiveness of the work organisations. In a few cases additional interviews with some transnational partners were conducted (**LV**, **CZ**). This helped to get an assessment of the transnational partners' perception on mutual learning.

Scope of the evaluation

The scope of evaluation is mainly based on findings in the national interim evaluation reports. These reports presented mainly an analysis of the partnership formation, of the stability of partnerships and of the work organisation. Benefits and value-added of transnationality were assessed more in-depth only in some of the evaluation reports (e.g. **PL**, **LT** and **LV**). It needs to be mentioned that in the case of **CZ** an additional extensive evaluation report covering the transnationality principle was elaborated in 2008. In other reports only cursory remarks were made.

3.4.2. Key Findings on the Implementation of the Transnationality Principle

Formation of transnational partnerships

Although the way transnational partners were selected was not analysed in the same way in the different national evaluation reports, it is possible to make some general observations:

(a) **Former contacts and historical links**

In some cases transnational partnerships were built on former contacts (e.g. **CZ**, **CY**). According to the **LV** evaluator, DPs partly tried to find partners who they knew before. This was helpful for them. This statement contrasted with the **LT** evaluation report, where it was argued that the search for international partners was made according to strategic organisational objectives. It was explained that fostering international co-operation on the basis of previous experience might not necessarily increase the value of international partnership as such co-operation usually could not create as many opportunities as partnership with new partners.

In **CY** DPs have often chosen GR DPs as transnational partners due to strong historical links. The representatives of the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure explained that an important learning process was taking place as regards the implementation of European Programmes at DP level as well as at programme level. However, it appeared that in a number of areas, in particular with the view of

implementing the key principles, **CY** was more advanced than **GR**, in particular in implementing the partnership principle, gender mainstreaming as well as in the area of asylum seekers. Further DP partners often came from the **UK**, where also the historical links were very strong.

Among the transnational partners of DPs in **MT**, there was a dominance of DPs from **UK**, which can be explained by the **MT** history and the strong links to the **UK**. There was also a preference for South European partners (**IT**, **ES**, **FR**, **PT**), which is little astonishing as it was expected that they had similar problems and similar institutional cultures. According to the Managing Authority, **MT** was always seeking to establish bilateral contacts. With EU accession and programmes like **EQUAL**, the contacts were multiplied. Thus, the “innovation” brought in by **EQUAL** was the establishment of multilateral contacts, which was regarded as very positive by the Managing Authority.

(b) **Similarities of issues addressed**

The main factor for choosing the “right transnational partners” consisted in the similarities of the problems of inequality and discrimination to be tackled (but not necessarily the target groups)¹². This was a condition for an effective work of the transnational partnerships, as was already shown in the EU-wide evaluation report of 2006.

(c) **Specific thematic expertise acquired in specific countries**

The analysis of the structure of transnational partnerships presented in the **CZ** interim evaluation report showed that the choice of **IT**, **FR** and **ES** partners was in many cases linked to their longstanding tradition in the area of social economy. Further, the choice of **DE** partners in priority 5I was not astonishing, as **DE** was absorbing a relatively large number of asylum seekers. According to the **LT** evaluator, for examples, the Scandinavian DPs were often too advanced for **LT** DPs. This was confirmed by the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure. But at the same time they said that the most useful partners come from **SW** and **FI**.

(d) **Geographical proximity**

The **SI** evaluation team has pointed out that DPs had many **IT** partners due to the geographical proximity. The **SI** evaluation team perceived this geographical focus in the choice of partners as potentially problematic.

(e) **No active search**

In some cases, the partners from new Member States did **not search actively** for transnational partners, but were approached (e.g. **EE**). In this case, it is important that the DPs counterchecked whether these potential partners were the right ones. The **EE** evaluation team showed in its report that in some cases, **EE** DPs would have identified additional

¹² The **LT** evaluation team argued that international co-operation was most successful in case the DP partners were so similar that they could generate joint innovation projects. Therefore, partner selection could not be limited by a target group itself. Comparative measures or, even better, ways to solve the relevant problems should be used as the deciding factors.

countries in the course of the project from which they think they could learn. They were complaining that a change at this stage of the Programme was not possible. The evaluation reports also showed that **EE** DPs were often contacted and we concluded from the report that they were less active in searching for the right partner. Generally, it was found that partnerships where partner met during action 1 had a higher probability to have the right composition. This confirms former findings of the EU-wide evaluation (Final report, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, 2006).

In most cases, the DPs only participated in one **transnational cooperation agreement**. In the case of **MT**, the 5 DPs were involved in 8 transnational co-operation agreements. In our view this was not understandable as the budgets for transnational cooperation were anyway very low. With the participation in several transnational co-operation agreements, the problem of low budgets was increased.

Internal governance structure and role of different partners

The **CZ** evaluation team made an analysis of the internal governance structure and work organisation. Three models of work organisations were distinguished:

- Work in working groups, with the involvement of all DPs;
- Work in working groups, without the necessity of involving all DPs. All the work was based on the interest of DP partners;
- Distribution of tasks among partners.

In the opinion of the **CZ** evaluation team, the first way enabled better cooperation and provided that the DP members with appropriate competences were member of the groups. The second method respected existing conditions of DPs (financial allocation on transnational cooperation agreements, existing competence in a given field). The effectiveness of the third form of cooperation was limited, because it did not allow the exchange of experience and the “empowerment” of partners.

In general, due to budget restrains DP members did only rarely take part in transnational activities if they were not taking place in their home countries. Low budgets for transnational activities represented a problem in all new Member States (except in **HU**). In the case of **CY**, the Managing Authority did not perceive this as a problem as the communication within the DPs was very good and the results were transferred.

HU represented an exception in this respect, as the DPs had comparatively important transnational budgets. According to the **HU** Managing Authority, study visits were regarded by DPs as being very satisfying.

It is interesting to note, that according to the **PL** evaluation report, private sector DPs met with the transnational partners more frequently than public sector institutions, which were more reluctant.

Transnational cooperation at Programme level

Transnational cooperation at the Programme level was found to be important by some of our interviewees. It should be noted that at Programme level, **CY** had contacts with the IE National Support Structure and outside EQUAL they had contacts with Racine, which was also the National Support Structure for EQUAL in FR. The **CZ** Managing Authority stressed that their contacts with their PT and UK counterparts were most beneficial.

3.4.3. Benefits of Transnational Cooperation

The following benefits were identified in the national evaluation reports or were pointed out during the interviews:

(a) **Contribution to innovation: increase in knowledge and transfer of methods**

In many cases DPs were found to be highly motivated to learn from the experiences in other Member States and imported either tools or methods or ideas helping them to improve their own approaches.

Examples for useful results for DP activities in the area of gender equality, the integration of ex-prisoners, of asylum-seekers, of disabled as well as of new methods of training were mentioned.

- The **CZ** evaluation team gave some examples of transfer of methods which contributed to the creation of innovation of the **CZ** DP (e.g. in the area of education for asylum seekers, motivation programme for homeless people): In the first project one municipality, thanks to the experience of the FR partner, was using a network of concierges in order to train them and prepare them for offering social services to persons with restricted mobility (elderly, disabled persons, mothers with children on maternity leave etc.), who live in municipal houses. There was a multiple effect, new job positions were created, new and actual concierges gained new qualification and a higher grade of inclusion of disabled persons into normal life was achieved. The second project was focused on deaf people and persons who dealt with them. In addition to the provision of educational activities for both of these target groups an on-line centre of sign translation and the internet platform „Start in the job“, which would help deaf people in accessing the labour market, were being set up. Another product, the Czech-German vocabulary of sign language, would serve as a basis for further versions. **CZ** DPs also benefited from structured feedback from transnational partners.
- The **SK** National Support Structure mentioned gender mainstreaming training (e.g. for social partners) as a specific area where a **SK** DP could learn from their FI partner. A further example for learning from transnational partners referred to the integration of ex-offenders.

- During the interview the **LV** evaluator gave the example of a DP which is active for deaf people and got good ideas from DE about organisation of social assistants.
- The **CY** Managing Authority and National Support Structure interviewees provide the following examples for learning from transnational cooperation: In the “praxis” project, led by the **CY** Employers Federations, the development of standards for professional qualifications made use from the UK and GR experience in this field and wanted to develop the system further. A further example referred to the import of methods from ES and GR in the area of promoting gender equality.
- According to the **LT** evaluator, experience from the **CZ** Republic in the fields of psychiatry was helpful. BE and FR partners proved to be very useful partners regarding the target group “people with hearing disabilities”. There was one example where the cooperation with Scandinavian DPs was useful with regard to the target group of homosexuals. Another example where transnational co-operation helped to develop innovative solutions was the co-operation “EQUAL HIGHWAY” between Vilnius and Klaipeda.

(b) **Contribution to mainstreaming**

Transnational activities were helpful for political lobbying and mainstreaming, in particular if transnational events were organised (e.g. **CY, CZ**).

(c) **Capacity building of DPs**

Raising professionalism among DP member staff was named as a result from learning of other working cultures (e.g. **CZ**). This is particularly true for NGOs (e.g. **HU**). The **SI** evaluation team found out that transnational cooperation served as a substitute for Managing Authority’s and National Support Structure’s support. Experience from other DPs on how to implement EQUAL was regarded as very useful. The EU10 evaluator could indeed observe during a previous visit that **SI** DPs could obtain much advice from their TN partners.

(d) **Learning from benchmarking**

In the view of the **PL** National Support Structure, transnational cooperation was helpful in demonstrating that social problems existed all over Europe. It was stated, that transnational cooperation taught the DPs to respect the diversity of opinions and styles of policy making. Based on the interviews with the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures the usefulness of benchmarking was confirmed for other new Member States as well.

(e) **Intangible results**

It was stressed that many benefits were not visible (e.g. **HU**). This diminished possibility for mainstreaming of the results of transnationality.

As the **SK** National Support Structure underlined, a lot of the learning was taking place, although benefits were often indirect. Transnational cooperation helped DPs to better understand policies, e.g. how gender policies work. The **SK** National Support Structure further explained that whether DPs learn depended on their own learning capacity. This was not stated by other interviewees, however, based on the experience of the EU-wide evaluation of Round 1, we think that this finding can be generalised.

(f) **Increase in self-confidence**

Increasing self-confidence, as others can learn from own DP approaches was reported in the different new Member States (e.g. **CZ**, **LV**). In **LV** this has helped to raise motivation of DPs in implementing transnational activities.

Overall assessment of the cost-benefit relation and the effectiveness of transnationality

Although, the overall assessment of transnationality made by evaluators and Managing Authorities and National Support Structures was positive, weak points were highlighted. Evaluators have generally been more critical in their assessments than Managing Authorities and National Support Structures.

In the following an overview is given of the assessments of the effectiveness of transnationality as expressed by evaluators, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures.

- The **CZ** evaluation team was cautious about assessing the value added of transnational partnerships in its interim report, despite an overall positive assessment: “So far it is not possible to conclude how the different types of transnational cooperation are functioning, or to judge the effectiveness of the transnational cooperation towards the outcomes of activities or the extent to which transnational cooperation contributes to the development and creation of innovation and better dissemination of best practices. The cooperation is in the phase of gaining experience and identification of skills or competences of particular subjects in relation to the realization of TCA and DP work programme.”
- In contrast in **PL**, according to the evaluation report, DPs had high expectations from transnational cooperation, but these were not met as transnational cooperation proved to be a vehicle for exchange of opinions and for discovering new perspectives rather than gaining directly access to new tools of policy delivery.
- According to the **LT** evaluation team, the assessment of the DPs was varied: For some DPs, transnationality was very useful, while others said that they only participated (e.g. in a conference). As a general assessment, the evaluator concluded from its analysis that “the majority benefited.” The results of the evaluation, based on surveys and case studies showed that DPs believed that the impact of international co-operation on the project relevance was positive and very significant. According to the evaluator, the

impact on project efficiency was twofold. In terms of costs, the impact of international co-operation could be positive. This happened when products developed for international operations were used or when they were borrowed from international partners and in case learning from mistakes made by others was taking place. On the other hand, if international co-operation had no specific objectives and was only used to transfer experience, it brought no economic benefit. In such projects, international co-operation activities are rightly regarded as too expensive and the outputs were too low to offset costs. In terms of the output scope, some development partnerships indicated that their output scope will be wider than planned because of international co-operation and this was often identified as the value added of international co-operation. All development partnerships agreed that international partnership contributed to the project's efficiency. It is noticeable that the impact of international activities on the project was stronger and involvement in international activities was more active in development partnerships set up within one sector and operating on a national scale. In development partnerships operating on a regional scale, international co-operation was mostly aimed at taking over the experience.

3.4.4. Implementation Problems of Transnationality

DPs encountered the following types of problems while implementing transnationality:

- (a) The **time frame** for the implementation was considered as being too short.
- (b) **Language problems** for communicating with partners, who had a poor command of the English language, were mentioned in the national evaluation reports.
- (c) The **EE** evaluation team pointed to difficulties linked to different **working cultures**. Training on intercultural cooperation was organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs. This had contributed to solve these problems.
- (d) Furthermore, the **EE** Managing Authority explained during the interview that EE DPs had problems to transfer methods and tools as the structures, institutions and values differed between countries. One explanation might be that, as the evaluation report and interviews revealed, DPs made in many cases the wrong choice of partners.
- (e) The **LT** Managing Authority explained that due to the **small budgets** for transnationality, DPs did not always perceive the necessity of transnational cooperation. Small budgets represented a problem for most DPs in new Member States (except **HU**) as they did not allow for equal participation in all activities. Budget constraints limited also the possibility that more DP partners and beneficiaries could participate in transnational activities.

- (f) The evaluator and National Support Structure criticised the insufficient funding for implementation of the transnationality principle in **CY**. The budget only allowed for knowledge transfer, exchange of experience but it was in their view not possible to develop common projects. The evaluator also regrets that the National Thematic Network in **CY** was not active concerning transnational activities.
- (g) The **LT** evaluation team stated that in the new Member States there were significant differences concerning the time needed for the implementation of EQUAL, which became more and more visible during action 3. So transnational cooperation during action 3 was only possible with Member States with a similar time flow.

3.5. Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

3.5.1. Methodological Approaches in the National Evaluation Reports

The depth of the evaluation of gender mainstreaming varied significantly across the new Member States and refers mainly to the interim evaluation reports. Only in the case of **CZ** additional efforts for the evaluation of gender mainstreaming were undertaken and a separate report was completed in 2008.¹³

- (a) **Assessment based on surveys** of type of DP activities in regard to gender mainstreaming and case studies (**CZ**) and in-depth interviews (**LV**).

Example for the evaluating the implementation of gender mainstreaming

The **CZ** evaluation team included questions in its survey, looking on whether the projects were “neutral” with regard to equal opportunities, whether they considered specific needs of men and women or whether positive action was taken. DPs could give 3 possible answers:

- The project is “neutral from gender equality perspective”, if it does not have direct or indirect influence on equal opportunities of women and men.
- The project is “oriented to gender equality perspective”, if it considers different needs and interests of women and men. It contains measures or recommendations to support equal opportunities of women and men and contributes to the removal of discrimination and inequality.
- The project is “positive from gender equality perspective”, if the equal opportunity of women and men stands at the centre of attention of the project and if it is the objective of the project to remove the obstacles, which segregate men and women in the approach and participation in given disciplines, areas and professions.

A second survey question referred to the “possibility to document application of gender perspective for the implementation of work programme, activities, choice of personnel and participants to project”.

The **CZ** Managing Authority launched a separate evaluation of Gender mainstreaming in April 2008. The evaluation was based on a case-study methodology. About 30 case studies were carried out among **CZ** EQUAL DPs. A large number of these case studies referred to Theme 4 G and 4 H. In addition 15 case studies were conducted among projects of other ESF and ERDF programmes, including case studies of the **SK** Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources as well as 15 additional case studies among **SK**, AT and DE EQUAL DPs. Apart from the case studies, the evaluation also utilised an expert panel and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis of the application of the strategy of gender mainstreaming. The case study focused the analysis to implementation issues and the assessments but no impact assessment of intermediary impacts of Gender Mainstreaming in EQUAL was carried out.

¹³ RegioPartner, IBS Slovaki (2008): Evaluation of the approaches of Czech and foreign development partnerships within CIP EQUAL in the application of the horizontal topic of gender mainstreaming. Final Evaluation report. 22/09/2008.

The **LV** evaluation team looked at gender mainstreaming from a wider perspective than equal opportunities between men and women. According to the evaluation report, innovative approaches to equal opportunities consisted in ways of involvement of target groups in the project activities.

- (b) **Mechanical assessment** of gender mainstreaming in some evaluation reports (e.g. **SI, MT**) and self-evaluation of DPs (e.g. **LV, HU** and **CZ**)
The **MT** evaluation team argued in its report that it was already a success that women represented an important share of the participants. They particularly referred to the participation of women in activities carried out within the entrepreneurship Theme. However, in our view a deeper analysis would have been interesting as it appeared from the interview with the Managing Authority that unemployed women had in general a higher educational attainment than unemployed men and were therefore more suited for entrepreneurship.
- (c) **No explicit evaluation** of gender mainstreaming was made in the reports of **PL, EE** and **LT**. In the interview with **SK** it was confirmed that gender mainstreaming was not subject to the interim evaluation.

3.5.2. Ways of Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

The context

The gender equality reports published by the European Commission, gave a varied picture of the gender gaps in the new Member States. The 2007 report¹⁴ showed that the difference in employment rates between women having children and those having no children was higher than EU average in **EE, SK, CZ** and **HU**, while it was lower in **SI, LT, CY** and **LV**. Note that **SI** ranged at the top of EU25 with regard to the employment rates of women with children and **MT** at the lowest end. The variation of employment rates of men depending on whether they have children was low in all EU-25. Absolute gender gaps in employment rates were very high in **MT** and **CY** and very small in the Baltic States.

Also the pay gap between men and women showed a wide diversity across new Member States: While the gender pay gap was lowest in **MT** it was at the upper end ladder of EU25 in **CY** followed by **SK**. Gender pay gap was also above EU25 average in **LT, LV** and **CZ**. The gender pay gap reflected to an important extent the gender segregation by occupation. Accordingly the gender segregation was lowest in **MT**. Further, it was still lower than EU average in **PL**, while it was above EU average in **LV, LT, SI, HU, SK**, and highest in **CY** and **EE**.

These few figures show that there are large differences in the type of gender discrimination across new Member States. Furthermore, as the interviews of the EU10-evaluator showed, the low gender gap in employment in Central and

¹⁴ Commission of the European Communities: Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on equality between women and men – 2007, Com (2007) 49 Final

Eastern European Countries in the past did mask high inequalities with regard to the burden to reconcile work and family lives between women and men.

Further, a report prepared by the gender network WIDE in 2002 showed that women had tended to have benefited less from the transition to market economies than men. The author stated: "Many women today experience the denial of their equal economic and social rights on labour markets in Central and Eastern European countries. As with the establishment of market economies, research has shown that the labour market transformation process in Central and Eastern European Countries since the beginning of the 1990s has exacerbated gender inequalities in labour markets, or created new forms of inequality, rather than diminishing them. Some of the gender inequalities were caused by longstanding structural gender differences, such as occupational segregation, as well as day-to-day discrimination of women, while others were consequences of the post-1989 economic transition process."¹⁵

Implementation of gender equality through EQUAL

On the basis of our interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structure as well as with the evaluators, it appeared that only in few new Member States the implementation of gender equality had received much attention. This was in particular true for **CY** and **SI**. In **CY** this was linked to the fact that gender equality and gender mainstreaming was on the political agenda for the last years.

Example of an approach to implement gender mainstreaming (CY)

The Managing Authority gave the examples of gender mainstreaming activities carried out by one DP which tries to tackle behavioural issues: 23 councillors and key actors were trained in gender equal opportunities, of which 10 came from the Department of Labour, NGOs and the Police Academy. The involvement of this latter group for gender training can be regarded as quite innovative. About 8 out of the 23 participants were men, which was regarded at least as a good start for tackling men for gender training. The training lasted for 6 months and was then certificated. Seminars were also organised in companies. Gender mainstreaming was a field of learning for all involved actors.

In contrast it was stressed in a number of new Member States that many DPs had no real strategy (e.g. in **CZ**, **SK** and **HU**) and for DPs outside the thematic priorities 4G and 4H there was little awareness about gender equality (e.g. in **CZ**, **SK**, **LT** and **LV**). External gender experts were rarely consulted.

The following example of the **CZ** interim evaluation report as well as the additional expert's evaluation carried out in 2008 showed that the way DPs thought to comply with the gender equality and gender mainstreaming requirement in the Programme did often not correspond to a comprehensive approach towards gender mainstreaming.

¹⁵ Steinhilber, S. (2002): Women's Right and Gender Equality in the EU Enlargement. An Opportunity for Progress. WIDE Briefing Paper

Example: Assessment of the implementation of gender mainstreaming by the national evaluator (CZ) and by an additional evaluation study carried out by external experts.

According to the **CZ** national evaluation team, the given survey data led to believe that implementation equal opportunities of men and women had remained a peripheral affair. Basic steps were declarative in nature and at best ensured accepted ratio of men and women in the project team. The highest consciousness could be observed in case of DPs, which worked out a plan or a strategy or employed external specialists.

The additional external experts' evaluation study share the global assessment, however, they point to differences between projects focusing directly on equal opportunity for women and men (e.g. projects implemented within Priority 4 Reducing the differences between the chances of men and women in the labour market are qualitatively superior) and the projects that applied gender mainstreaming "only" as a horizontal priority as regards activities related directly to the application of gender mainstreaming. This finding is explained by the fact that DP members in Theme 4 have previously dealt with equal opportunities of women and men and having experience with projects funded by other EU funds. The projects, which clearly see their objective in changing social conditions, focus specifically on people in decision-making positions and on awareness campaigns and other dissemination activities, which are aimed at structural change. Transnationality brought valuable inputs in case the projects put a focus on gender mainstreaming.

In the case of many other projects, however, it appeared that without a real interest in the issue of gender mainstreaming it had been mistakenly reduced to monitoring of the representation of women and men and support for women (especially those with small children).

Women accounted for most of the clients of the projects. Although support for women and the equalization of their position undoubtedly is a part of the application of gender mainstreaming.

The **LT** Managing Authority and National Support Structure explained during the interview, that all projects dealt with equal opportunities, but did not describe it: "Some DPs do it naturally, but they don't know it." Also the **CZ** additional evaluation report pointed out this type of finding.

According to our interviewees in **LT** there was a general context of growing awareness. Government programmes were including more and more gender mainstreaming aspects. The same holds true for the present ESF programme in **LT**. Gender mainstreaming was a principle in the ESF programmes and was an important selection criteria

3.5.3. Implementation Problems of Gender Mainstreaming

Lack of awareness in the whole society

A number of interviewees stressed that a lack of awareness for Gender Mainstreaming was a structural problem of the societies in the new Member States (e.g. **LT**, **CZ**, **HU**, **MT** and **SK**).

The **LV** evaluator explained that the DPs understood gender equality issues only if they were operating in Theme G or H. However, they targeted only women and not men. More generally DPs operating in the other Themes were in the first place concerned with their specific target groups. This was also reflected in the type of monitoring carried out by DPs: they monitored the implementation of gender mainstreaming by relating to participant quota. The representatives of the managing Authority and National Support Structure explained that the DPs were representing the lack of understanding of gender equality in the society”.

In the same vain, the **HU** Managing Authority and National Support Structure explained during the interview, that other societal problems had retained more attention, in particular disability and the problem of Roma. It is explained that gender mainstreaming was not much in mind of the society.

Lacking understanding of the concept by DPs

Generally bad understanding of the DPs of gender mainstreaming was pointed out. This can be regarded as a consequence of the low awareness of gender equality issues in the society.

- The **LT** national evaluator recommended to take more active steps and to hire some experts. The evaluator explained during the interview that it was difficult for the DPs to comply with all the principles.
- The **CZ** additional evaluation report on gender mainstreaming, points to the lack of sensitive differentiation of the needs of various groups of women (e.g. women of different ages, positions in society, education, ethnic origin, state of health, etc.) was a problem obvious in many projects.
- Interestingly, according to the **CZ** additional experts' evaluation, the comparison of the EQUAL projects and other ESF programmes did not confirm a direct correlation between the amount of the budget and the efficiency of the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Smaller projects often show more effective application of the gender mainstreaming principle.

Lacking monitoring activities

It was argued that DPs could have performed better if they were obliged to monitor regularly on the specific activities done in order to increase gender equality (e.g. **LT** evaluator).

Guidance given by Managing Authorities and National Support Structures

Guidance in gender mainstreaming was organised in 2 ways: Seminars were organised for the DPs in a formal way and Managing Authorities and National Support Structures were providing more informally guidance to DPs.

- For instance, in **CZ** a seminar was organized, where an expert of the City of Prague explained how to implement the principle and an expert of the Ministry of Labour taught about gender budgeting. Furthermore, in the view of the **CZ** national evaluator, apparently material explaining the implementation of gender mainstreaming was sufficiently used by DPs. However, according to the additional experts' evaluation on gender mainstreaming, the National Thematic Network E were rather critical about the handbooks of the application, although it was well received by DPs.
- In **PL**, the National Support Structure organised separate tutoring sessions to each DP on gender mainstreaming.
- The **LV** evaluator stressed that continuous guidance was crucial for persuading DPs and DP members to implement equal opportunities between men and women. Further, the evaluator explained that DPs were also learning through the evaluation process, as they got ideas about implementing gender mainstreaming through the evaluator's questions.
- The **HU** Managing Authority participated in the elaboration of the EU Mainstreaming Guide. The Managing Authority had high expectations regarding the implementation of gender mainstreaming in **HU**. During monitoring visits, the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure tried to push the DPs to implement gender mainstreaming.
- In contrast, the case of **EE** showed how difficult the understanding and implementation of gender mainstreaming still was, as in the opinion of the Managing Authority the EU guidelines were not practical enough.
- According to the **SK** National Support Structure, the DPs did not get much guidance at the beginning. The European guide was translated but this initiative was obviously not sufficient. But the National Support Structure gave DPs guidance for filling in the section on gender mainstreaming in the monitoring reports. By doing so the National Support Structure showed the DP the gender mainstreaming potentials of their projects. This had helped DPs to get a better understanding of the concept of gender mainstreaming. Thus, a learning process at DP level was initiated.
- According to the **CZ** additional experts' evaluation on gender the initial phase of the project was underestimated. At the time of selection of projects the gender mainstreaming principle should have been considered in a more thorough way.

3.6. Implementation of the Innovation Principle

3.6.1. Methodological Approach in National Evaluation Reports

Evaluation task

The evaluation of the implementation of the innovation principle should have been a central task of the national evaluation reports. The European Commission formulated “Standard Terms of Reference for Independent Evaluators for the EQUAL Community Initiative in the new Member States”. To make these standard terms more concrete and operational a transnational working group of representatives from Managing Authorities have developed a “Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007 - 2008” which focused on the evaluation of “innovation, mainstreaming and impact”. In principle, this voluntary consensus represented a very important initiative for the synthesis of national evaluation reports. It could have rendered results about the implementation of innovations comparable, if all evaluators had applied the same methodology.

Basically, it should have been the task of national evaluation reports to:

- Identify the incidence of innovation;
- Assess the quality of innovation based on the indicators: potential relevance, effectiveness, value added as compared with the existing policies, feasibility/sustainability and mainstreaming potential/capacity.

However, only few national evaluation reports have followed this common proposal and have structured their evaluations accordingly. This made the task of the EU10 evaluation extremely difficult.

Moreover, a difficulty arose from the fact that two distinct evaluation tasks were in some cases mixed up:

- The evaluation of the quality of innovation (including the analysis of mainstreaming potential) and
- The evaluation of the assessment and validation of good practice, which should be part of the evaluation of the mainstreaming process.

Eventually, in some new Member States the national evaluators played a central and active role in the validation process. So the internal project task of the evaluation of innovation was somewhat mixed up with the evaluation of the validation process.

Evaluation tools

The tools for the evaluation of innovation in the national evaluation reports were mainly based on:

- Self-assessment of DPs made by answering survey questionnaires;
- Self-assessment of DPs stated during interviews with DP manager and DP experts in the context of the case studies;
- Analysis of self-evaluation reports;
- In one case, additionally to DPs’ self-assessment, the assessment of the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure was included. This helped to get a wider view (**PL** evaluation);

- Additionally interviews with politicians were conducted (**LV, EE**);
- In **EE** additional interviews with employers were carried out.

Thus, the assessment of the quality of innovations by national evaluators was mainly based on the self-assessment of DPs. The **CZ** evaluation team pointed to shortcomings of this methodology, which itself applied, as DPs' knowledge was often constrained to their regional or sector context and therefore had a narrow view of what was innovative and so their judgement was intuitive. The evaluation team claimed that the evaluation of innovation would only be feasible once DPs' innovative solutions and products would have undergone the validation process for mainstreaming. Furthermore, as can be assumed on the basis of the **PL** evaluation, there was a bias by type of respondents as well as by type of Themes.

Only exceptionally, an attempt was made to get a more balanced view concerning the quality of innovations. It would have been most valuable to include also more systematically the assessment of external actors and in particular of external experts. We understood that the contact to external experts was quite difficult to establish in most new Member States. The use of external experts was more frequent during the validation process for mainstreaming.

Scope of evaluation

In **LT, PL** and **CZ** the quality of innovation was assessed in the national evaluation reports in accordance with the "Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007 – 2008". This means the quality of the innovations was assessed before they entered the mainstreaming process and the above mentioned quality criteria have been used. So the evaluation teams assessed innovations with regard to its relevance, effectiveness, feasibility, mainstreaming potential and value-added. Case studies and self-evaluation reports have been used. However, the evaluations differed in the method they applied. While the **LT** evaluation team used a scoring method based on the evaluator's assessment, the **PL** evaluator based the scoring on the DPs' assessment.

Evaluating innovation in LT

The **LT** evaluation team used the scoring method for the evaluation of the quality of innovation. The evaluation team explained in its report that it analysed the quality of innovations by comparing the activities of development partnerships in **LT** and action plans with innovation development practice described in the EC Guidelines. All activity groups recognised by the evaluators as innovative were assessed according to the selected evaluation parameters, where "unlikely" is worth 0 points, "quite likely" 1 point and "very likely" 2 points. Then, the maximum score was compared against the actual score. The resulting percentage score of the innovation showed the actual conformity of innovations developed in **LT** with the theoretical standard of good innovation development. All 238 "innovative solutions" were assessed as regards the quality of innovation on the grounds of this method.

The **PL** evaluation team included the evaluation of innovation in its assessment of the effectiveness of EQUAL. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships' operations, three fields were assessed: the progress of work on the product, the

innovativeness of DP's products and the potential of DP's products for mainstreaming.

In order to assess the innovations of the DPs, the evaluator used self-assessment items in the survey questionnaire as well as in questionnaires addressed to the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure. For the survey questions addressed to DP leaders, the evaluator had assumed that the novelty of a solution being developed can be expressed, to a different extent, in several dimensions¹⁶:

- The target group selection: The innovation score depended on the degree to which the discriminated group (the ultimate beneficiary of the developed solution) was covered by aid programmes in the past. This means that the highest score for innovation would be assigned to products addressed to beneficiaries who received no public sector aid before.
- The type of need satisfied: The second measure of innovation was connected with the type of the problem suffered by the selected group, which constituted the direct or indirect reason for discriminating against that group in the labour market, and for which solutions were looked for. The assessment of DPs' product innovation depended on whether that problem had been well defined and whether there were effective tools available to solve that problem. The innovation would be higher if the identification of the problem so far has been poor and if few good tools existed to solve it.
- The form of providing services to beneficiaries: The third dimension in which the novelty of a tool or a system could be exhibited was the method used to solve a selected problem of the target group. Of course, tools applied nationally served as a reference. The innovativeness was higher if the partnership tried to use methods that were never used before.
- The geographic availability of the product. The larger and more universal the scale in which the proposed solution was new or unique, the more innovative it was.

The scores for all of these criteria, expressed on an appropriate scale, were then added up and recalculated to a score on a 1 (not innovative) to 5 (very innovative) scale. Innovativeness was also analysed with regard to the solutions proposed to combat discrimination and reduce inequality. In the case of the 10 partnerships selected for case studies, evaluation team members independently assessed the innovation of tools being created on the basis of the information obtained and their own knowledge. They focused on the proposed product (deliverable) of action 2. The results of self-assessments of 59 partnerships which filled in the questionnaire addressed to DP leaders served as the background.

The **PL** evaluation team assessed the mainstreaming potential of the DPs activities and projects separately. The evaluator used a scoring method applied to results of questionnaires: In the method adopted, the total score for the product mainstreaming potential was the sum of individual scores for innovation, target group size, tool effectiveness, cost effectiveness of the tool, progress of product work, investment expenditures necessary to replicate the tool, time necessary to replicate the system.

In the context of assessing the mainstreaming potential the **PL** evaluation team assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of innovations. The innovations were assessed by the proportion (declared at this stage) of the "number employed" or "number of new jobs" to the "number of all beneficiaries" using the consulting and training services of the project. Furthermore the evaluation team was using a comparison of costs and the number of people brought into employment or employment created.

¹⁶ Source: PL national interim evaluation report

In most other new Member States the scope of the evaluation of the implementation of the innovation principle was often less structured, and covered the evaluation criteria at this stage of the EQUAL process only partly.

In **HU** the Managing Authority and the evaluators explained that the quality of innovation was a major criterion for the selection process of the DPs before the projects started. Therefore, the evaluation did not analyse the process of developing and implementing innovations as such. The focus in **HU** was “best practice” evaluation (which included innovation as one criterion). The national evaluator stated that during the project phase DPs took the innovation principle as a “formal request” and not as one of the key principles of EQUAL.

In **MT** the innovation was an important selection criteria in the beginning of the projects but than no further testing or selection based on quality criteria took place. As in **HU** the focus was on best practices.

Assessment of the quality of innovations in SK

During our first interview in early 2007, the **SK** Managing Authority and National Support Structure provided differing assessments of the incidence and quality of innovation. The Managing Authority based their assessment on the monitoring report and concluded that 1/3 of DPs proposed totally new solutions and 1/3 of DPs offer standard solutions. According to the **SK** National Support Structure a tentative assessment based on her experience (monitoring - on the spot-visits) would give the following picture: 1/5 of the projects produced very new ideas and 1/4 of the projects consisted in a new combination of existing methods and tools (e.g. combining training and counselling or combining research on gender and research on age). About 1/2 of the projects had identified new target groups for existing methods and tools (e.g. Roma, elderly, offenders and women on maternity leave). These estimations are based on experience made in the initial implementation phase. In the final interview the Managing Authority stated that the innovations have not been assessed at all.

the following estimates regarding level of innovativeness within each theme were made in the final interviews in early 2009 with the National Support Structure (represented by coordinators of each theme), Adaptability had the lowest rate of innovative projects (35%), while the remaining areas (employability, racism, social economy, gender and asylum seekers) had 60 to 70% innovative projects. The reason for the lower rate of innovativeness under the employability theme was that most DPs within that theme featured fairly standard, computer-assisted training programmes.

It is noteworthy, that the **EE** evaluation team assessed innovation according to the relevance, efficiency with regard to the launching of innovation, the performance of innovation as well as sustainability in terms of the scope of application of innovations. The evaluation team asserted the innovative character of each single project. The evaluation team applied the scoring method to each of the elements of innovation. The sources used were monitoring reports of the DPs, self-assessments and internet-based questionnaires. Furthermore, the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure were interviewed. However no in-depth case-studies were carried out so that the information

provided in internet-based questionnaire could not be verified. The performance and sustainability of the innovation of the projects could not be evaluated so far. The synthesised results were highly generalised as a consequence of the “individual approach” chosen.

In **LV** project applications contained 34 innovations, qualified as innovative approaches to employment issues, training policy, targets, techniques and implementation systems. The report of the **LV** Ministry of Welfare referring to the implementation of the Mainstreaming Strategy of Community Initiative EQUAL in **LV** includes 25 innovative projects. Only 6 innovations would be regarded as process oriented innovations, the majority of innovations are aimed at the development of new methods or approaches or improvement/adaption of the existing ones.

In **SI** the final evaluation report referred to information collected in spring 2007. The report only provided a list of all planned innovations or of innovations which had started to be implemented. Furthermore, the evaluator only reported DPs self-assessment and description of innovation without making an own assessment. We also understood from the interview with the National Support Structure that in **SI** no form of innovation-assessment model was developed.

3.6.2. Implementation of the Innovation Principle

Conditions of Emergence of Innovation

The following conditions for the emergence of innovation could be disentangled on the basis of the national evaluation reports and interview results:

(a) **Political demand**

The idea that EQUAL should be used to accelerate the “catching up” to EU social standards was widely spread in the new Member States. Nevertheless, the new Member States differed extremely in their view what priority was given to social policy issues. But it holds true that EQUAL projects in the new Member States were in most cases based on a real political demand.

The **CZ** evaluation team stated in its report, that DPs developed their projects on the basis of the demand for services. Similarly, the **CY** evaluation team stated on the basis of the survey results that DPs designed their projects on the existing policy needs and gaps. It was explained to us, that the strong orientation on gender equality within EQUAL in **CY** was linked to the fact that most applications the Managing Authority received were concerned with this issue. According to the National Support Structure, this demonstrated that it was a real societal demand. Also in the area of integration of young people in the labour market the relevance of the innovation was asserted by the Managing Authority.

(b) **Analysis of needs**

The development of an innovative solution may be based on the identification of an inequality or discrimination problem for which societal and political demand is not visible, but for which DP initiators think it is necessary to propose ways for improvements.

These identified needs may or may not correspond to a specific political demand. To give an example, in **LV**, according to the evaluation team, the supply of innovative solutions exceeded demand. Also the **CZ** evaluation team stated that innovations should be fostered but not forced because it saw the risk that any novelty was presented as innovation.

Independently from the question whether the development of the innovation was demand or supply-side driven, the research on the needs was crucial for the development of innovative solutions, as stressed by the **LV** evaluator. A lack of research was argued by the **LT** evaluator to have been an obstacle for further development of innovation. We think it is indeed important to conduct research on the causes and forms of inequalities and discrimination. Note, however, that the inclusion of research institutions as DP leaders may not be a guarantee that new research on discrimination and inequalities is carried out, as the **PL** example shows. In the case of **PL**, academic institutions were found to implement their mainstream research and were not particularly innovative with regard to problems addressed by EQUAL.

(c) **Contribution of the partnership principle**

The further development of innovations and the ways to implement the innovative projects was positively influenced by the implementation of the other EQUAL principles: In particular, the implementation of the partnership principle was regarded as beneficial for the development of innovations as the different partners bring in different ideas. As already argued, small organisations tended to have more innovative ideas which they never could have implemented in projects by themselves. At the same time, the knowledge of some of the larger partners was useful for assessing the feasibility and for understanding where further adjustments to the project idea needed to be made (e.g. **LV** evaluator, **CY**, **LT**, **MT**, **SK** and **CZ** Managing Authorities).

(d) **Contribution of the transnationality principle**

Transnational cooperation was argued to be a positive factor for the development of innovation (e.g. **LV**, **MT**, **CZ** Managing Authority).

(e) **The laboratory function**

According to the **LV** National Support Structure, an important condition for EQUAL consisted in the given possibility to make a risky investment. Other representatives of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures would certainly support this argument.

- (f) **Knowledge of the sectoral and regional context**
According to the **CZ** evaluation team, DPs tended to develop innovations mainly in the local or sector context.
- (g) **Previous work and public interest**
During the interviews, the **LV** Managing Authority argued that the success of the named innovations depended also from the work that had already been done before EQUAL. The time frame of EQUAL was too short to develop something from zero, so the argument. But the DPs could push processes which started before. As an example the policies for disabled were mentioned, as the policy field as such existed before, f. ex. there had always been a State budget. But EQUAL allowed for the development of new tools. In the view of the interviewee innovations within EQUAL could not be radical. The assessment of evaluators and Managing Authorities in other Member States was rather mixed in this regard (see below types of innovation).

The Dynamics of the Development of Innovation

The process and the **dynamics** of the development of innovation during action 2 were generally not analysed by the national evaluators. On the basis of interviews with the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures we can, however, conclude, that

- (a) In one group of countries, **DPs generally claimed for the permission** to make changes as regards the implementation of the projects.
- (b) In the other group of new Member States, **DPs refrained** from making any changes (e.g. **HU**) as this was linked to an additional administrative burden: “There are enough technical changes, so that they don’t want to have more changes” (**HU** Managing Authority).

It should be noted, that even in those new Member States, where DPs could get agreed changes of their work plans, the burden of administrative requirement was still regarded as hindering the further development of innovation (e.g. **LT**).

Changes in work programmes of DPs

Changes that were agreed by the Managing Authorities included mainly:

- Adaptation linked to the reaching-out or changing relevance of target groups and
- Redefinition of sectors of intervention.

Examples for changes at DP level:

- According to survey results of the **CY** evaluation, nearly half of the DPs reported the following corrective measures to maximise the DP’s added value at the end of action 1:
 - Measures to strengthen the team spirit of the partners;

- Implementation of publicity activities in cooperation with the partners;
 - Implementation of actions to ensure the viability of support structures developed after the end of the project.
 - Establishment of a memorandum of partnership and exchange of good practices among the DPs after the end of the projects.
- In **LT** the evaluation team mentioned the example of one project which was about to retain people in the region (and thus to combat emigration). But the DP had to adjust, as at the time the project could finally start, the people already left. The DP had to refocus the target group.
 - The Managing Authority and National Support Structure in **MT** gave the example of enlarging the target group due to problems of reaching out ex-prisoners. A further **MT** example was the larger number of asylum seekers taking part in the DPs activities than originally planned as since then demand had risen.
 - In **SK** examples for the type of changes asked for by DPs given during the interview included:
 - Changes in the target group;
 - In some cases this could be linked to the changes in the external conditions regarding a target group;
 - In some cases DPs wished to add activities;
 - DPs asked also for changes as a consequence of the delays which occurred (Action 2 started about half a year later than initially planned due to payment problems).
 - In the case of **CZ**, the Managing Authority explained that they got requirements for “technical changes” allowing the DPs to follow their initial work plan. But DPs did not try to adjust more basically the methods, products and tools developed as a result of a try and error process.

It needs to be stressed that changes of work programmes were not made as a consequence that the tested method failed. In our view this possibility would have been important to comply with the laboratory function of EQUAL.

Role of the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures concerning changes of the work programme

The attitude of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures towards changes in the work programmes was an important factor. We can distinguish in principle between a more pro-active stance and a reactive stance of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures in this respect.

(a) Pro-active stance:

In a few cases the Managing Authorities and the National Support Structure were pro-active and asked DPs to adapt their working plans to a changing environment.

- In **CY**, the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure asked the DPs to revise their work plans in the middle of the project implementation phase and to submit these revisions at the same time than the mainstreaming plans by end of April 2007: "Now it is time to rethink, to reflect and it is time to make changes".
- Like in the case of **CY**, the **PL** National Support Structure was pro-active as it initiated that all projects were "refreshed" from the view point of innovativeness before action 3 started; DPs were explained that an "individual approach to training" was not innovative. Consultations with each DP were conducted by the National Support Structure to get that message across.

(b) Reactive attitudes:

The other Managing Authorities allowed for changes when they were asked for, but did not advise DPs to do so. In general the changes should not affect the initial objectives of the project. For example, in **SK**, the Managing Authority was in favour of reducing the budget and allowed for a lower scope of activities, if the DPs could not implement the whole foreseen activities. The requested changes had to help to reach the initial objective in order to be approved. The changes needed further to be realistic with regard to the financial plan.

Incidence of innovation

Innovation was a selection criterion to accept project proposals into EQUAL; in action 1 and action 2 DPs were encouraged to identify the innovative elements within their projects. There was a general tendency in the DPs - but also at the level of the National Thematic Networks and Managing Authorities - to use the label "innovative" generously. In the consequence the number of innovative products declared by the DPs was impressive.

To give a few examples:

- In **CZ** the evaluator stressed that the nearly 800 innovations of the 72 DPs indicated in the monitoring database was an unrealistically high number. Subsequently, in the context of a range of surveys conducted among DPs, the incidence and the quality of innovations was assessed. Finally, 77

innovation products were put to validation between September 2007 and June 2008.

- In **LT** the 28 DPs developed 218 innovative solutions, according to the assessment of the evaluator, the **LT** evaluator classified 48 out of 218 innovative solutions as innovations as complying with the quality criteria.¹⁷
- The **SI** evaluation team stated in its report, that most DP members regarded their projects as highly innovative with no obvious differences by theme,
- In **PL** survey results presented in the national evaluation report showed that at the level of the National Support Structure, supervisors are ready to call 42% of all projects as innovative and 17.5% as very innovative. The volume of the identified incidence of innovation cannot be directly compared across countries, as the way they were identified, and therefore also the criteria applied, differed.
- In **HU**, the evaluators' assessment of innovative content, in the search of "best practices", was based on a questionnaire and on the examination of so-called network products. In total, 41 products were qualified as innovative. So in **HU** the assessment of the quality of innovation was seen as part of the best practice selection process.

3.6.3. Types of Innovations

General overview

The analysis of the evaluation of innovation made in the national evaluation reports and by Managing Authorities and National Support Structures during the interviews showed that the innovations developed and implemented by DPs had been supporting a shift from traditional policy making to tailored target groups. Usually, the benchmark for the innovativeness was either the regional and national context; only exceptionally innovation could be considered as innovative at the European level.

The identification and classification of innovations also differed as in some cases single policy measures are recorded and in other cases holistic approaches were developed. Furthermore, it needs to be stated that not necessarily the most "innovative" solutions were selected by national evaluators but the easiest ones to be mainstreamed. National evaluators followed different classifications logics for presenting innovations. Evaluator listed innovations in the logic of the themes of the National Thematic Networks (e.g. **CZ**), by field of policy intervention (e.g. **LT**), by the novelty of target groups, the needs of the target groups, and the territorial dimension (**PL**). In some cases single, unclassified examples were provided.

¹⁷ Dagne Elzbieta Eitutyte, Evaluating Innovation in Lithuania, presentation at the EQUAL evaluation seminar, Prague 23-25 November 2006

On the basis of the information we received, the following different types of innovations could be identified (note, however, that there can be overlaps between these different types):

(a) **New target groups**

The following groups were in particular targeted in EQUAL projects and were not seen as traditional target groups: disabled (e.g. **LV, LT**), elderly (e.g. **PL**), young people (**CY**), Roma (e.g. **HU, SI, SK**), highly marginalised groups like ex-offenders (e.g. **SK**) and drug-addicts, young people coming from institutional care (e.g. **MT**). Asylum seekers represented a new target group for all new Member States.

(b) **New policy areas**

New policy areas or policy areas with new approaches were in particular diversity management (e.g. **CZ**), gender mainstreaming (e.g. **CY, MT, SI, and CZ**) and the integration of asylum seekers (**CY, MT**). The creation of advisory centres and specific measures for business start-ups of target groups figured among the observed innovations (e.g. **CZ, MT and SI**). An important area for innovations was also the further development of the social enterprise sector (e.g. **CZ, SK**).

(c) **Innovative solutions in more traditional policy areas**

Furthermore, in more traditional policy areas, innovative solutions were recorded. This concerns the development of new methods and tools in the area of training (e.g., **LT, CZ**). Motivation of target groups and tailor-made approaches were key elements to these approaches (e.g. **SK**). Nevertheless, this policy area was regarded as less innovative by the evaluators.

(d) **Introduction of new methods**

The introduction of new methods at project level were in particular mentioned by the **CZ, SK and LT** evaluators in the area of training as well as regarding new forms of providing services (**PL, HU**). These new methods and new forms of providing services included e.g. the use of information technologies to train disabled persons, the creation of new incentives, the development of more holistic approaches, new approaches in the treatment of prisoners (training measures instead of penalties). Also new methods have been used to promote the labour market participation of women like job-sharing or job-rotation models.

Examples of innovative products and solutions by Member States

In the following we listed for all new Member States examples for innovations which meet in some respect “quality” standards. We described above the problems concerning the evaluation of the quality of innovations. In case no formal process was set up we asked our interlocutors in the interviews to select examples of innovative and interesting EQUAL solutions. Also results from

validation processes which focused on best practice and not on the “quality of innovation” have been taken into account.¹⁸

Therefore, the following does by no means represent an exhaustive list of the innovations or validated innovations. The purpose is to illustrate the kind of innovations highlighted by evaluators, National Support Structures and Managing Authorities. Warnings are also expressed, as not all of the following examples were assessed in a rigorous way by national evaluators.

In **CY**, the Managing Authority and National Support Structure regarded the following intervention areas as quite innovative and relevant:

- The **asylum seekers theme** can be regarded as very innovative as by law asylum seekers were not allowed to work. The experiment to let asylum seekers work had very positive results. So 32 out of a group of 50 trained beneficiaries could be placed in jobs. Also the holistic and integrative approach, the cooperation between public entities and NGOs dealing with refugees was assessed as highly innovative. This project was already selected as one of the EU-wide best practice examples.
- Labour market integration for **young people** was perceived to be a highly relevant policy area for innovation as a real problem was tackled for which solutions needed to be found. Although, overall unemployment was very low in **CY**, the labour market integration of young represented a problem. It was explained that one reason for this problem relied in the large number of family-run businesses: if these companies employed staff which did not belong to the family, they looked for experienced employees. Within the **CY** youth project the creation of a “discrimination free internet site” was assessed as innovative.
- DPs working in the area of **gender equality** were all very innovative in terms of methodologies. It was also regarded as innovative that public bodies and NGOs work together. **CY** evaluators assessed as very innovative the employment counselling to help women who want to return to work after maternity leave within the thematic priority “reconciling family and professional life”. The measures included skills development, mentoring and guidance.

The **CZ** evaluation report provides a list of examples of products or processes regarded by DPs as “best innovations”. These examples were grouped according to the National Thematic Networks, in which they participated:

National Thematic Network A: Integration of individuals with difficulties to the labour market:

- A set of methodology tools for special training of small groups of hearing-impaired persons;
- Methodology – long-term retraining modules;
- DVD – Corporate social responsibility;
- A methodology guide for employment counsellors.

¹⁸ The validation process of best practices in itself is analysed in the mainstreaming chapter.

National Thematic Network B: Entrepreneurship:

- A teleworking portal for the intermediation of teleworking jobs;
- Methodologies of self-employment support centres;
- An innovation system supporting employment in the country;
- Advisory centres for self-employed persons that have just started their business.

National Thematic Network C: Social Economy and community services:

- A theoretical model of a social firm and social firm standards verified in the operation of two social firms;
- An e-learning support training course for full-time social work students;
- A system measure – a legislation provision providing for long-term funding of a mobile hospice from national healthcare insurance – a draft wording to be incorporated in an amendment to the National Healthcare Insurance Act;
- A DVD containing a manual and a film on developing social services in the country;
- A guide for local authorities and NGOs.

National Thematic Network D: Adaptability and Life-long learning:

- A training module for young people between 13 and 18 in socially excluded areas
- Outplacement – transfer of information from some EU countries – PL, IT, DE, and FR; Communicating the Outplacement model to target groups through seminars, conferences, publications, and a CD-ROM;
- Educational counselling methodology;
- Family of products INCREASING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE – a comprehensive system of lifelong counselling and training for unemployed persons looking after children under 15 years of age, especially mothers after parental leave;
- A special course completed with a certified examination to train deaf electrical engineers for examinations on Decree 50/78 Coll.; successful trainees are authorised to work on electrical equipment on their own.

National Thematic Network E: Equal opportunities for men and women:

- Portal www.rovensance.cz;
- The PODPORA counselling programme – to verify the personality potential of a CS and facilitate career advancement;
- Methodology and pilot testing of e-learning support in the opening section of a divided first year of an economy bachelor's study programme, combining the non-formal and formal education;
- The Government Agency of the Year Award.

National Thematic Network F: Integration of foreigners and racially discriminated persons into the labour market:

- A practice book – supplementary learning material for Czech language courses;
- A suite of integration courses;
- Methodology for individual social work.

In **EE** in the view of our interviewees, the most innovative aspects of EQUAL consisted in the identification of new target groups (gamblers, sex-workers, farmers, prison inmates).

Also some methods of intervention were new, in particular

- The Rehab Centre for ex-prostitutes, the entire process of transitioning sex-workers from prostitution to work;
- Distance work for Estonian islands' dwellers.

The **HU** evaluation report stated that innovation was often based on the fact that a new group was targeted e.g. Roma and homeless. The linking of different sectors and the implementation of mentoring were also seen as important innovations. Overall, the 41 identified innovations in the context of the best practices selection process involve training, mentoring and the development of instructional and methodological manuals (28), and innovative services responding to the needs of disadvantaged people, youth, women and unskilled people (8). In the themes of networking and social inclusion another 3 innovative projects and 2 innovative components have been identified.

Examples for Innovations in **LT** (provided in interviews and in the national evaluation reports)

- The first attempt to develop a consistent system embracing phases of customer motivation, medical treatment, psychological and social rehabilitation and occupational reintegration. The special feature of the mechanism is its deposit system: an addicted person can get the funds on his/her medical treatment reimbursements if he/she stays in the rehabilitation clinic at least 30 days. (DP Overcome Your Addiction and Win the Life).
 - An action plan for equal employment opportunities (DP Open and Safe at Work.It).
 - A holistic solution to improve social competences of people released from imprisonment in order to integrate into society and into the labour market (DP Give me a Hand and DP Towards the Open Door).
 - Child care services in preschool establishments are provided in line with family needs, i.e. child care groups with longer working hours are established (DP FORWARD! Family and Work Reconciliation Development).
 - Free-of-charge support to families who experience temporary hardship (DP Women Employment Model).
-

In **LV**, the following examples for innovations were named by the evaluators and the Managing Authority:

- Projects on the integration of disabled were regarded as being “really new” and EQUAL was filling in policy gaps. One example in this area was the development and implementation of E-learning systems for people with disabilities. A further example concerned a project aiming at the labour market integration of deaf people.
 - A further innovative and successful project was a rehabilitation centre for prisoners.
-

In **MT**, the following projects were regarded by the evaluator as being innovative:

- The integration of young people coming from institutional care
- The integration of asylum seekers

Managing Authority and National Support Structure stated:

- For the Housing Authority the use of “training” was completely innovative;
- A register for work-seekers looking only for part-time jobs was an innovative measure in **MT**;

- Process orientation and new training tools in the gender project were seen as innovative elements.
-

According to the **PL** evaluation report, the most novel dimension of products developed as part of EQUAL was the form and method of providing services, while the target group itself had, in most cases, already been identified. It should be added that during the interview, the **PL** Managing Authority stressed that seven partnerships were active in the area of age management, a theme, which till recently was little addressed or explored in **PL**.

On the basis of case studies the **PL** evaluators classified more concrete examples of innovative projects according to the following criteria:

1. Extent to which a target group was new or underserved:
 - Return to work for victims of domestic violence;
 - Multicultural Centre for Vocational Training for asylum seekers, immigrants, etc.
 2. New needs of that target group:
 - Foreign language certificates for visually impaired;
 - Certification and recognition of skills gained informally, i.e. through extracurricular activities.
 3. New tools to serve these needs (21 out of 40 of innovative projects):
 - Job-sharing for women returning from maternity leave;
 - Job rotation model for training participants -- jobless temporarily take places of those attending training.
 4. „Territorial“:
25 out of 40 analysed innovative projects were considered as nationally unique and 8 as unique in Continental Europe.
-

In **SK**, the evaluator gave two examples of innovative projects during the first interview in early 2007:

- Training of prisoners;
- Interactive training courses for unemployed persons.

A common innovative element of these two examples consisted in increasing the motivation of beneficiaries.

In our final interview the **SK** Managing Authority provided further innovative examples:

- The development of a methodology for implementing new forms of work in the **SK** labour market favouring disadvantaged groups (mothers, elderly people) was mentioned. This methodology consisted of the following items: analyses and tools to detect the potential of people and enterprises, training model; web support tools for both, those who seek such a work form and those who want to implement it at their businesses, an information portal for employers; on-line training; a catalogue of positions suitable for Tele-work, database of trained Tele-workers. The project was useful for mothers (and fathers) at maternity leave and employers, but it did not work for elderly people where the problem to adapt to new technologies proved to be paramount. The methodology was still in the process of testing within the region at the time of interview.
- The main effort of another mentioned project by the Managing Authority was focused on the implementation of alternative penalties within the **SK** law system. The activities of the project consisted of education and workshops aiming for a broader implementation of alternative penalties in **SK**. The workshops were designed for deputies of public administration, municipalities and NGOs. The goal has been reached and alternative penalties occurred more frequently as a result of the activities of this DP. In addition an innovative aspect of this project is an individual approach towards convicted people. They had been lectured and

educated to gain skills necessary for success in labour market during imprisonment and in the time shortly after their release. Prisoners had a chance to work in cooperating companies outside of the prison. The result of this innovative approach consisted of a lower degree of recidivism of criminal acts and in a higher degree of successful reintegration of the released prisoners to society. This approach had not been applied in **SK** before.

As in other countries, in **SI** the innovation consisted also in discovering new target groups - in particularly those suffering from multiple risks of economic inactivity, e.g. elderly women, young drug addicts - and in addressing issues that had not been a part of public discourse (discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation).

The final evaluation report highlighted only one interesting innovative approach, the combination of several disadvantaged groups, which were rare in EQUAL, since each DP focused on a specific target group or limited number of groups. The combination of target groups was innovative and had positive effects on de-stigmatisation of a separate group. However it needed to be well planned. Target group representatives were not a unified group, but a specific part of population with different characteristics and life styles.

3.6.4. Implementation Problems of the Innovation Principle

On the basis of the evaluation reports and the interviews with the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures, the development of innovative solutions and their testing was rendered more difficult by the following factors:

- (a) **Changing legislative and institutional environments** could represent an impediment for the testing or further development of an innovative solution;
- (b) **Changing labour market conditions** was quoted as one of the implementation problems. We assume that this problem remained marginal if the totality of Development Partnership was considered;
- (c) In general, problems of some Development Partnerships in **reaching-out** of the target groups, in particular the highly marginalised groups, were stressed;
- (d) **Weak motivation** of the target groups in participating in educational or active labour market policy measures (e.g. **CZ, PL**);
- (e) **Changing attitudes** was a lengthy process, as has been stressed by some interviewees (e.g. **MT**). This is likely to be a valid remark for all Member States.
- (f) **Political changes** at national or local levels could lower the mainstreaming potential of an innovation or even render its testing difficult;

- (g) In some cases, problems with a **low management capacity** of DPs were named (e.g. **HU**);
- (h) The understanding of the **development of innovation as a process** was not always clear to DPs (**LT** evaluator). DPs were not sufficiently briefed on the meaning of the quality of innovation in terms of the necessary processes and the different steps to develop good and innovative products;
- (i) **A lack of monitoring and insufficient self-evaluating of the effectiveness** of the innovative product was addressed by the **LT** evaluator. It was criticised that a reference situation was generally not defined;
- (j) Often investments in fixed assets would be necessary for the full-scale testing of innovations, according to the **LT** evaluator. Better results would be achieved by combining investment from the EU Social Fund and other sources of funding for investments in capital goods. For instance, in addition to target group motivation, professional or other skills training, it would be necessary to facilitate acquisition of the inventory necessary for business start-up, funding of a professional marketing campaign and other necessary activities to use the acquired skills in practice.

3.7. Implementation of the Mainstreaming Principle

In this chapter we synthesise the national evaluations of the mainstreaming process. We look at the mainstreaming strategy, analyse to what extent EQUAL products were validated for mainstreaming, synthesise the activities developed by key actors, mainly DPs, National Thematic Networks and specific mainstreaming groups as well as Managing Authorities, and provide an overview of the main implementation problems of mainstreaming.

3.7.1. Methodological Approach in the National Evaluation Reports

Only few reports contained a proper and systematic analysis of the mainstreaming process at all levels (e.g. **CZ**, **PL**, **LT** and **LV**). National evaluation reports provided different types of assessments of the mainstreaming process and the work of DPs and the National Thematic Networks. These included mere descriptions of the events and activities carried out and only in some cases assessments of their efficiency and effectiveness.

The **CZ** evaluation team measured the outcome of the ongoing mainstreaming process at national level by quantitative indicators, such as the frequency of meetings, contacts with policy-makers, the dissemination and publicity of EQUAL results (including mainstreaming events) and the result of the validation process (good and bad practices). The following indicators were used:

- Meetings: official meeting of National Thematic Networks, informal meetings on behalf of the whole National Thematic Network, meetings organised on behalf of the whole National Thematic Network;
- Contacts: contact with politicians at the national level, contact with politicians at the local level, external experts at National Thematic Network meetings;
- Publicity: bulletins, media-press products, media-radio, TV products and events, expert articles, seminars;
- Good/best and bad practices: number of validated products.

Furthermore, they measured how target groups used the outcomes of DPs such as electronically available products, TV products, workshops and seminars, newsletters. In addition, a separate evaluation of the implementation of action 3 was carried out.

The evaluation of mainstreaming in **PL** is noteworthy as in addition to the analysis of the mainstreaming strategy and the work of the National Thematic Networks, the **PL** evaluation team carried out a thorough analysis of the mainstreaming potential of innovations.¹⁹

The **LT** evaluation was based on the evaluation of seven different projects phases, in this system mainstreaming is evaluated in phase V – Transfer outside the target group and VI – Influence national policy. The evaluation consisted of two levels: description of goals and objectives and description of project results.

¹⁹ We have to recall that it is very difficult to make a consistent distinction between the evaluation of the quality of innovation and the validation of innovations for mainstreaming.

Some evaluators focused their analysis of mainstreaming at the DP-level. They were assessing mainstreaming potentials of single DPs (e.g. **SI**) or their mainstreaming plans (e. g. **MT**).

The methodology of the evaluation of mainstreaming in **EE** is remarkable. Besides the normal desk research they did 11 interviews with policymakers, they asked not only the 13 managing partners but also 25 DP members. A questionnaire among participants of mainstreaming activities was distributed (sent to 487 participants; 115 answers). The evaluation in **EE** is the only one where a questionnaire was distributed among a control group of employers (91 answers) and the evaluation also contained a benchmarking with EQUAL programmes in **LV** and **LT**.

In the **HU** evaluation report the focus is on the analysis of mainstreaming potential as part of the best practice evaluation of products and so-called networking-products. The mainstreaming process was not evaluated as such.

In **CY** we got the impression that the evaluation process was somewhat hampered due to delays in the whole EQUAL programme. Anyhow, in **CY** action 3 was not finalised, the DPs were all active in April 2009. It was planned that the project phase of EQUAL would last until June 2009. So the national evaluator explained that at the moment of our interview (in April 2009) it was too early for the final national evaluation. The evaluation report was qualified as “preliminary” report and contained practically no information concerning the evaluation of mainstreaming in **CY**.

3.7.2. Mainstreaming Strategy

The mainstreaming of EQUAL results is the most challenging objective within EQUAL in the new Member States. There are major differences across the new Member States as to the effort undertaken to implement the mainstreaming principle.

In the systematic logic of EQUAL the planning and implementation of mainstreaming activities should be based on the following activities:

- Formulation of a comprehensive mainstreaming strategy;
- Assessment of the quality of innovations, which includes the analysis of the mainstreaming potential, if this assessment was not provided in action 2 as initially planned in the EQUAL guidelines;
- Selection of innovative EQUAL products for mainstreaming, this process was often based on the assessment and selection of “best practice”;
- Implementation of mainstreaming activities;
- Evaluation of mainstreaming activities.

In the view of the EU10 evaluator these activities would have been essentials of a coherent mainstreaming process. However, this was the case only in some new Member States but by far not in all of them.

Mainstreaming strategies had to be formulated at different programme implementation levels and thus by two different actors: the DPs and the Managing Authorities or National Support Structures. The implementation of mainstreaming by DPs took place in the context of action 3 of EQUAL.

It has to be stated that five out of the 10 new Member States (**EE, CY, LV, MT** and **SI**) did not publish their mainstreaming strategies on the EU EQUAL website. In **LV, MT** and **CY** a mainstreaming strategy was formulated but never published on the EU EQUAL website. In **MT** the National Support Structure produced a national mainstreaming document only in February 2008. This was critically assessed in the national evaluation report as very late and so reducing the possible mainstreaming activities.

EE and **SI** did not produce any mainstreaming strategy or mainstreaming planning document. The Managing Authority in **EE** stated this was because they were unable to integrate mainstreaming into their initial call for proposals as they were not sure what mainstreaming was. Furthermore, they questioned the EQUAL schedule and stressed that a mainstreaming strategy could be developed only once the products to be mainstreamed had taken definite shape. Our interviewees in **SI** stated that few months before the end of the programme they were warned by the European Commission they had no mainstreaming strategy. But the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure decided there was no point in developing a strategy this late.

3.7.3. Validation of Innovations for Mainstreaming

EQUAL produced an impressive number of so-called innovations. As a testing ground, the assumption of EQUAL is that the developed innovations cannot not all be regarded as complying with quality criteria which makes them worth to be mainstreamed. Therefore, a process of validation of innovations is crucial. The process of validation of innovations for mainstreaming was interpreted in the new Member States in different ways. The idea that EQUAL should be a laboratory for innovation, including the testing of innovations was only partly realised. Only in **CZ** this testing idea was clearly visible f. ex. through creating a database of good and bad practice.

As mentioned above, the assessment of the quality of innovations should be an integral part of the implementation process, and the quality of the innovation should be a precondition before the innovation entered the validation process for mainstreaming. This logical sequence in the design of the EQUAL programme was not respected in all new Member States.

Nevertheless, the identification of “best practice” and / or the “validation of innovation” were in some new Member States the milestones for EQUAL products before they entered the mainstreaming process.

The assessment and validation process of good practice differed widely across the new Member States. Differences existed in respect to:

- The actors involved in the “validation” process (National Thematic Networks or subgroups within the networks, external experts, the national evaluator, DPs);
- The formalisation of the validation process versus acceptance of self-assessment of DPs without additional assessment;
- The object and scope of the evaluation and validation (innovation, best innovations, best practices including the implementation of all key principles of EQUAL).
- The evaluation criteria “mainstreaming potential” should have been already a quality criteria for the validation of innovations. But also at this stage of the process the mainstreaming potential was not systematically assessed in all new Member States.

In some Member States the selection was provided by National Thematic Networks (e.g. **MT**), by the evaluator (e.g. **PL**) in common workshops (e.g. **HU**) or through external experts (e.g. **CY**). In some Member States the focus was less on innovation but on best practice (**HU**, **CY**).

The Portuguese validation process of EQUAL was a model for a number of new Member States when they organised validation or best practice selection processes. This “Portuguese model” was presented in the brochure “EQUAL making changes possible - a practical guide to mainstreaming”²⁰. The fact that this model was taken into consideration when setting up own procedures also showed that the new Member States needed guidance and orientation in the mainstreaming process.

In **CZ**, the validation process was organised first at the level of DPs and then at the level of the National Thematic Networks. DPs were asked to provide a list with their innovative solutions by end of July 2007 for the validation process. Propositions could also be made by the National Thematic Networks.

Basically, the following mechanisms were created to support the implementation of validation: setting up an National Thematic Network Coordination Group enabling a strategic approach to supporting mainstreaming at the programme level (vertical mainstreaming), a long-term inclusion of experts into National Thematic Networks on voluntary basis (even though this approach has proven to be difficult with regard to insufficient motivation of these experts), organising a conference on vertical mainstreaming presenting validated products in order to increase awareness about these activities (a Conference Book), creating a database of good and bad practice – examples of products with typical file formats (problems with good quality background materials). The validation was designed to be primarily used to confirm innovation and sustainability of DP results in order to avoid mainstreaming of results that might not be sustainable.

The final users of the projects were supposed to take part in the validation process. Further external independent experts and peers were involved. The validation methodology for good practice and innovative products was influenced by the

²⁰ EU Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and EQUAL Opportunities, Unit B4, September 2005

Portuguese approach. The validation criteria were: sustainability, mainstreaming potential, implementation of all of the principles. Every actor participating in the process had to give marks for the different criteria. DPs had to give their feedbacks on the strong and weak points.

Seventy-seven products were put to validation procedures between September 2007 and 30 June 2008. In most cases, these products consisted in methodologies, courses and information material. Overall, these were products that could be easily disseminated especially in the initial phase of horizontal mainstreaming.

In **LT**, innovations have been validated in a very systematic process²¹: Every thematic network had its own management group. These groups consisted of representatives from DPs, municipalities, academic establishments and other stakeholders²², potential consumers and external experts.

Management groups performed the following key functions:

- They established criteria for assessing innovative solutions suggested by DPs;
- They assessed innovation with regard to eligibility and to feasibility of solutions suggested by DPs, created and tested during action 2;
- They provided recommendations to DPs concerning the improvement of solutions and their mainstreaming.

38 out of 238 innovations were assessed, “tested in practice” and selected for mainstreaming. **LT** produced a comprehensive report “Equal: new Ways into the World of Employment. Towards Equality and Non-Discrimination”. This report provided a systematic overview of the tested innovations.

117 measures of holistic solutions (constituent parts) have been identified in the following areas:

Education services:

- Improvement of non-formal education services provided to the target group (19 cases);
- Improvement of non-formal vocational training services provided to the target group (5);
- Improvement of training capacities of non-formal education of workers (6).

Social services:

- Mediation services (identification, motivation to participate, involvement, employment and guidance services) (19);
- Psychological and social rehabilitation services (individual and/or group consultations) (17);
- Temporary lodging services (3);
- Post-employment services (11).

Health care services (2).

²¹ Audronė Zubavičienė, Inga Manelytė, Equal: new Ways into the World of Employment. Towards Equality and Non-Discrimination, Vilnius, 2008

²² Management groups involved representatives from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (Children and Youth Division, Labour Market Division, Equal Opportunities Division, Gender Mainstreaming Division, Labour Relations and Remuneration Division), Ministry of Education and Science (Vocational Training Division, Pre-school and Primary Education Division), Youth Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Department of Disabled Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority, Divisions of Education and Social Support of Vilnius City Municipality, Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, and Department of Sociology of Vilnius University.

Improving the system of public services:

- Implementation of the principle of social partnership (14);
- Improvement of organisational management (7);
- E-services (7);
- Improvement of the monitoring system (collection of data about the target group and analysis of social costs and benefits) (4).

Improvement of legal regulation (4)

In **LV**, the Managing Authority developed the draft „Mainstreaming strategy for the Community Initiative EQUAL programme in Latvia 2004 - 2006” where validation criteria of the good practice were included. 12 criteria for the identification of good practice were developed (among others: innovation, addressing equal opportunities, universality scope of effectiveness). The nine EQUAL projects identified 45 potential examples of good practice. The largest part of the potential good practice examples was oriented to the implementation of new methods and the development of new training programmes.

In **LV** the Ministry of Welfare installed a special thematic group “Equal rights in the labour market”. Within this group, products of 25 EQUAL projects were evaluated. Most of these products (18) were products for vertical mainstreaming.

In **HU**, the National Thematic Networks organised the process of identifying 19 products for mainstreaming. Based on the Austrian methodology, the national evaluators developed a template to describe “good practice” solutions, which was completed and returned by 25 DPs (out of 38).

Good practices have been grouped on the basis of the kind of methods and tools developed. 16 good practices included instruction, training and skills development programmes, 12 good practices included psychological services, consulting and mentoring. 11 websites were identified and 11 manuals or other types of publications have been mentioned. In 9 cases best practice is seen in connection with employment effects, and in 8 cases the best practice is based on research work and surveys.

In **PL**, the National Thematic Networks were important for the validation process. According to the evaluation report of 2007, the validation process was the first confrontation of project participants and their products with experts, other partnerships and potential mainstreaming customers (the latter practically did not happen). The feedback gave DPs a chance to adjust their project approach, thus contributing to the quality of DP products. By June 2006, about 64% of partnerships (63 out of 99) submitted their results for validation. The Theme D group was the best in this respect: after long initial procedural discussions making their first few months a more difficult period than in other groups, all of the partnerships impressively rallied towards the end of the period. Formally, the poorest results came from Theme G where just 18% of the results were positively verified. Apparently the products were not ready for mainstreaming.

The **PL** evaluator provided an own assessment of the mainstreaming potential of DPs innovative projects and activities. One of the outcomes of this analysis was that mainstreaming potential depended on the market size of the innovation. In the **PL** context, more than half of the innovative products could be considered as “mass products”, while only 11% were “niche products” addressed to smaller groups of beneficiaries. One of their assumptions was that “niche products” were in no way

worse than mass ones. They were even closer to the assumptions of EQUAL, as they required the identification and the diagnosis of problems of a narrower, precisely defined group of discriminated people. However, from the point of view of the criterion being assessed, their chances of broad replication were obviously smaller than those of "products for the many".

In the final interview with the EU10-evaluator Managing Authority and National Support Structure in PL explained that DPs estimate that about 40% of the innovative solutions had a chance for mainstreaming. In July 2008, there was one confirmed transfer, four pending transfers, six confirmed interests in adoption, ten cases of interest. However, the evaluator verified the stated "interest" and demonstrated that DPs overstated the mainstreaming potential. Managing Authority believed that 60% of products had no chance for mainstreaming.

In **CY** best practices were assessed by an external academic expert. The selection of best practices included the innovation principle but also the "good implementation" of other principles could be decisive for the selection. The **CY** evaluator claimed that 90 % of the best practices in **CY** were innovative but there were also best practice examples which were not innovative. The choice of the best practices was made according to the following criteria:

- Innovation;
- Coherence with specific needs, policy shortcomings, etc;
- Effectiveness (immediate quantitative results, etc);
- Expected results;
- Implementation potential;
- Scope of implementation;
- Empowerment;
- Accessibility (degree to which the target group can access products and practices, etc);
- Application;
- Efficiency.

The selected best practices were divided in 5 groups:

- Corporate interventions;
- Target group interventions;
- Active participation and empowerment of the target group;
- Interventions concerning social partners;
- Holistic intervention models.

The **CY** evaluators reported that the best practices have met the basic principles of EQUAL satisfactorily, in particular:

- Each best practice met at least four of the basic principles of the Community Initiative Equal;
 - The best practices had higher relevance in respect to the principles "Empowerment-Active Participation" and "Innovation" as compared to the other principles.
-

In **MT** an overview of best practice is an integral part of the central mainstreaming document, the so-called "policy brief". This document was elaborated by an external consultant and adopted by the National Thematic Network.

The policy brief was a very comprehensive document providing an overview of EQUAL results in Malta. But the document did not provide an assessment of the quality of innovation or a selection of best practice examples.

The process to identify best practices or “best innovations” for mainstreaming purposes was a difficult one and the results have to be treated with caution. Obviously the validation and selection standards were not the same across the new Member States.

Especially the small countries tended to be more “generous” as their number of products was much smaller. Moreover, for countries with relative low social standards it was much easier to identify innovations which fulfil at least the territorial criteria of a “national innovation”.

It has to be stated that the results of the selection of good practices and the validation of innovations did not form in all new Member States a solid basis for the selection of products to be mainstreamed. E.g. in **CY** it seems that the assessment of good practices was more a general assessment of the implementation of EQUAL principles rather than the identification of products for mainstreaming. Furthermore, in some new Member States no selection or validation process was launched at all.

For **SK** and **SI** it should be noted, that no deep analysis of the innovation was made and also the process to identify best practices was – according to information we received - not a priority.

In addition to this, as we will show below, mainstreaming especially at DP level was not a “controlled” process. DPs were often convinced about the quality of their products so they started dissemination by using dissemination channels which did not require big financial efforts like websites.

Estimations concerning the mainstreaming potential were difficult to make. On the one hand it was extremely difficult for actors which were not experienced in political decision making processes or lobbying activities to provide such estimations. On the other hand representatives from DPs tended to be positive about the high quality of their products. In the interviews of our first evaluation round the interviewees expressed very optimistic expectations concerning the mainstreaming potential of their innovations.

According to the **CZ** evaluator, most DP manager were convinced about the possibility of opening new areas in the labour market as a result of the proposed legislative changes and the activities of specific employment agencies. But, they pointed to possible mainstreaming problems and saw therefore the results of the innovative projects endangered by different opinions, attitudes of political representation and related reforms of legislative and social support system.

The **CY** Managing Authority and National Support Structure explained during the interview that training in gender mainstreaming was useful. A new legislation tackling gender equality was passed. The development of reconciliation of family and working life was a new issue in **CY**. The results of the DPs were likely to be mainstreamed. Further the results of the Development Partnership concerned with asylum seekers were likely to be mainstreamed as the Minister of Interior

was partner in the DP which was ideal for mainstreaming. There was a political will on the side of the Ministry for mainstreaming this project.

In **HU**, the Managing Authority thought that many innovations had in principle the potential to be mainstreamed. The interviewee stressed during our first interview that they could have an important impact on legislative change, in particular in the education system which was just undergoing reforms.

In our first evaluation round Managing Authorities and National Support Structures in **SK** stated that the mainstreaming potential of innovations depended on the type of innovations. In case of very new ideas, most probably only small tests would be carried out within EQUAL. These pilot projects were less easy to mainstream. In contrast, projects which were “marginally” innovative were often testing the new method or tool on a larger scale. These projects were in principle easier to mainstream. In the final interview with the EU10-evaluator it became clear that the mainstreaming potential of innovations was not assessed in **SK**.

3.7.4. Dissemination and Mainstreaming Activities at the Level of Development Partnerships

Dissemination and mainstreaming activities of DPs was the object of action 3. In the EQUAL guidelines it was stated that these activities should not be limited to the dissemination of results which was only one step of the process of mainstreaming.

In a number of new Member States, action 2 and action 3 were disconnected and DPs were submitting their mainstreaming plans quite late.

In many cases, DPs were submitting their plans only in the first half of the year 2007. It needs to be stressed that according to national evaluators as well as to some Managing Authorities and National Support Structures the DPs had difficulties to understand the concept of mainstreaming. At DP level only in some cases the development and implementation of mainstreaming was linked to the results of the validation process.

Furthermore, mainstreaming was implemented by DPs not only through their planned dissemination and mainstreaming activities but also in an informal way.

The Composition of DPs and Mainstreaming Capacity

The composition of the DPs with regard to its mainstreaming capacity needs to be scrutinized as it was a crucial element for effective mainstreaming, in particular vertical mainstreaming.

With regard to the structure of DPs, our interviewees in **CY** and **MT** stressed, that mainstreaming was taking already place informally even before mainstreaming activities started. This was due to inclusive partnership structure and a “small country effect”. The mainstreaming, and here especially the horizontal mainstreaming, of EQUAL products was not only based on planned

mainstreaming activities during EQUAL action 3 but a consequence of the DPs' work.

But also in other new Member States the importance of the involvement of strategic partners in the DPs for mainstreaming was stressed (e.g. **LV**). At the same time the mainstreaming capacity of DPs was small if they did not have the right partners.

The **SK** National Support Structure stated that DPs did not have enough connections to the political arena to pursue vertical mainstreaming. Two ex-Ministers were involved in DPs. But even in these cases, no effective vertical mainstreaming had taken place so far. The main problem consisted in finding the right persons to implement vertical mainstreaming.

Dissemination and Mainstreaming Activities of DPs

DPs focused on the development and implementation of dissemination activities. According to some evaluators this was linked to the fact that DPs did understand mainstreaming in the first place as the dissemination of EQUAL results.

For example, the **SK** National Support Structure stated that the DPs only partly understood the concept of mainstreaming. Mainly dissemination activities had been realised. Some DPs even had no plans at all. Managing Authorities stressed in the final interview with the EU10-evaluator that not a single effort was made by any DP to forward legislative or policy ideas and initiatives to the Ministry of Social Affairs by using the Managing Authority as intermediary. Similarly, in **EE** and **HU** it was found that the mainstreaming strategy was confined to disseminating the DPs' results.

Overall, the following activities could be identified:

(a) **Dissemination through all types of media**

- Dissemination activities included the production of all type of media. Evaluators have in many cases taken stock of the different products for dissemination.
- The **CZ** evaluation report described how DPs implemented their dissemination plans: Internet websites informing about the project; project presentation in the regional and professional press; dissemination of information through informative brochures; presentation in radio and television (regional and national) conferences, seminars and meetings with target groups, representatives of municipalities and policy-makers (e.g. presentation in the Senate Building, the Upper House of the Parliament of the Czech republic).
 - The **EE** Managing Authority had an agreement with a daily newspaper to publish updates on EQUAL implementation in the economy section of the newspaper and close to 40 articles appeared.

- In **HU**, the Managing Authority emphasised the high quality of their filmed information material. This was based on the outcome of the EQUAL Media projects for Roma and for disabled people.
- In **LV**, the dissemination strategy was evaluated positively by the evaluation team. The report stated: “Public information activities are successful. The partners’ web sites or joint project’s web sites, TV, press releases and publications, meetings, seminars and conferences are used for purposes of information. Public information is available at large-scale and comprehensive on implementation of EQUAL projects. The projects are investing considerable efforts to create understanding of general public on discrimination and inequality, to develop an appropriate terminology and make suggestions for changes in legislation.”

(b) **Contact to and mobilisation of political decision makers**

In addition to standard dissemination activities the efforts for raising the interest of local and national political representatives was a mainstreaming strategy of the DPs.

- In **CZ** several cases of direct contacts to political decision makers within Priorities 1 and 5 were noticed. However, it was argued that such efforts were rather examples of personal interests and initiatives of individual persons.
- In **MT** vertical mainstreaming activities were conducted by DPs in the form of independent lobbying activities to mobilise political decision makers.
- The mainstreaming strategy of DP’s in **EE** concentrated on channelling their policy ideas through the appropriate ministries. Most of the activities consisted in events like conferences. However, the evaluator stated that the policy makers targeted for interviews noted the absence of measurable objectives in the mainstreaming strategy on DP level. Mainstreaming goals remained vague, except for the Asylum Seekers’ project and the Choices & Balances (Life-Work balance) project. According to the evaluator mainstreaming was defined very late and was nearly neglected at the initial proposal stage. The Distance Work project did not include any mainstreaming objectives.
- The National Support Structure in **SK** explained that DPs made attempts to involve policy makers in mainstreaming events, but these attempts failed.

Guidance provided to DPs

Some Managing Authorities and National Support Structures have provided guidance to DPs for the development and implementation of their mainstreaming plans. In many cases seminars were organised and in some cases more specific guidelines formulated. However, in general national evaluators concluded that guidance was not sufficient or started too late:

- In **EE**, the Managing Authority organised a seminar for DPs and Monitoring Committee members. The **EE** evaluator stated that the Managing Authority carried out relevant and useful actions, but they took

action too late as at this stage most of the projects had already started their mainstreaming activities.

- In **PL** a seminar on mainstreaming was organised at an early stage of the Programme.
- The **LT** evaluator stated that public authorities could have been more constructive and could have provided more guidance.
- In **HU** we got the impression of a certain distance between the Managing Authority and the DPs concerning common mainstreaming activities.
- During the mainstreaming phase the **CZ** Managing Authority and National Support Structure re-enforced their support activities: e.g. increased methodological support and active participation of the Managing Authority in the mainstreaming process at programme level, a change of perception with regard to 'spot checks' by the National Support Structure, i.e. emphasising the role of a controller as a potential consultant and advisor for DP and the telephone help-line. On the other hand the **CZ** evaluation team stated in their report that the methodology handbooks and directives for DP, that had been prepared relatively late, proved not to be very efficient, just like the attempt to emphasise the regional dimension for the operation of National Thematic Networks.
- More guidance for DPs could have been provided in particular in **SI** and **SK**. Our interviewees in **SK** were not aware of any effort made by any DP to forward legislative or policy ideas/initiatives to the Ministry of Social Affairs or other political decision makers.

3.7.5. Dissemination and Mainstreaming Activities at the Level of National Thematic Networks

National Thematic Networks were the key players in the mainstreaming process in most of the new Member States. The roles of the National Thematic Networks consisted generally in providing a platform for exchange between DPs, to identify and validate good practice, to promote vertical mainstreaming and to promote the dissemination of results. During the EQUAL process the role and structure of the National Thematic Networks in the Member States developed in different ways.

The structure of thematic networking

National Thematic Networks were structured on the basis of different logics:

- (a) by Themes,
 - (b) and/or by policy fields
 - (c) and/or by horizontal issues
 - (d) and/or by target groups.
- In **CZ** 6 National Thematic Networks were set up:
 - A. National Thematic Network "Integration of individuals with difficulties to the labour market";
 - B. National Thematic Network "Entrepreneurship";
 - C. National Thematic Network "Social economy and community services";
 - D. National Thematic Network "Adaptability and life-long learning";

- E. National Thematic Network “Equal opportunities for men and women”;
- F. National Thematic Network “Integration of foreigners and racially discriminated persons to the labour market”.

Two National Thematic Networks were created within Priority 2, because strengthening the social economy, especially with regard to community services, was considered as very important within EQUAL.

- Also in **PL**, the main logic for the formation of National Thematic Networks was Themes: 5 National Thematic Networks in the Themes A, D, F, G, I were formally established in October 2005, which were operational in early 2006. Subgroups were set up according to target groups. National Thematic Networks have been active until 2006, but then their activities were suspended for six months, with the purpose of restructuring. They have not been evaluated in the final national evaluation report.

It is noteworthy that in the interim report, evaluation teams both in **PL** and **CZ** criticized that thematic networks were not established at regional levels.

In other new Member States a mixture of the different rationales for the organisation of National Thematic Networks was chosen:

- In **HU**, 5 National Thematic Networks were set up: persons with disabilities, gender mainstreaming, young people (with the focus on second chance schools), Roma population, integrated pathways for social inclusion of disadvantaged people and design of intercultural integration models. A subcommittee for innovation and mainstreaming at National Thematic Network level was established.
- In **SK**, five Thematic Networks were created: employability (the largest one), social economy, adaptability, gender and asylum seekers / combating xenophobia. The National Thematic Networks were the centre of mainstreaming and coordination. The networks were established in June 2006, met five times for two-day meetings and had about 60% participation rate (**SK** evaluator (in 2007)). A 3-days workshop on mainstreaming was organised. However, the final interviews with the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure revealed that for **SK** it is not possible to identify any structures or forms of an organised mainstreaming process at National Thematic Network level.
- In the three small new Member States only one thematic network was set up which made sense given the low number of DPs (9 DPs in **LV**, 7 DPs in **CY**, 5 DPs in **MT**). In **CY** the National Thematic Network “Cyprus Employment Network” was created very late and its work was exclusively focused on mainstreaming.
- In **EE** no thematic network was established. The Managing Authority argued that there were too few projects and these projects were very different. There was also no institutional body to channel common mainstreaming activities. In this context, according to the evaluator, DPs

expressed the opinion that the Managing Authority should have combined inputs from DPs and disseminate them to a wider audience and that it should have served as a filter and a selector of good practices but this hardly happened. The **EE** evaluator also stated that DPs were not aware of joint mainstreaming actions performed by the Managing Authority; 45% of DPs and 30% of lead partners thought the Managing Authority did not contribute to mainstreaming.

- In **SI** one workshop was organized in April 2007. This workshop was related to transnational thematic networks. However, no formal thematic network was formed in **SI**.

Inclusiveness of National Thematic Networks for Mainstreaming

Evaluation reports and interviews gave a varied picture about the inclusiveness of National Thematic Networks. In general, not only DPs were participating in National Thematic Networks but also external experts and NGOs outside EQUAL, and thus a good structure of National Thematic Networks for horizontal mainstreaming was implemented.

- In **PL**, also target groups participated in National Thematic Networks which was seen as a positive input. However, evaluators and interviewees from Managing Authorities and National Support Structures were more critical as regards the inclusiveness of DPs with regard to vertical mainstreaming. In **PL** the low involvement of political decision makers was seen as a “failure”.
- In **CZ** it took some time until the composition of the membership of the National Thematic Networks was satisfactory in the view of the national evaluator. The **CZ** evaluation team noticed in its interim report: “We do not know how the experts got nominated in National Thematic Networks, e.g. National Thematic Network A does not have any employer representative and in almost all National Thematic Networks representatives of academic and research organisations are missing. It is also necessary to emphasize the need of representation of social partners (outside EQUAL).” Further the evaluator points to the low participation of government bodies and politicians. The interview with the Managing Authority revealed that it reacted on criticisms and recommendations of the evaluator and was trying to attract more social partners, academics and politicians to participate in the National Thematic Networks. Revisions of the members of the networks were made regularly. The main difficulty consisted in involving policy makers from the Ministry, as they needed to be motivated, which proved to be quite difficult in some of the networks. According to the Managing Authority in **CZ**, the network on Asylum Seekers and Immigration worked well, as the Ministry of Labour as well as the Ministry of Interior were involved. The DPs needed the involvement of the Ministry of Interior which in turn wanted to know what was happening at DP level.

- According to the **PL** interim evaluation report, the composition of National Thematic Networks was formally rather inclusive but the evaluation team noticed that the real participation of central government representatives, which was crucial for vertical mainstreaming, was rather poor (except in Theme A). According to the National Support Structure, DPs initially planned mainly activities for vertical mainstreaming and with the time moved to more horizontal mainstreaming. Beneficiaries' participation as well as the inclusion of experts in National Thematic Networks was viewed very positively by DPs with regard to horizontal mainstreaming.
- The Managing Authority in **HU** explained during the interview in 2007 that the relevant players were not all involved in the networks. The networks should have been strengthened in this respect. But also in the final interview the Managing Authority and the national evaluator confirmed that especially the involvement of public authorities could have been more intense.

The National Thematic Networks were either chaired by DPs or external experts, but were not chaired by key actors in national policy making as suggested in the handbook for the implementation of EQUAL in the new Member States. Both models had their shortcomings. The **CZ** evaluation team assumed on the basis of the experience made in EU15 in the EU-wide evaluation report of 2006, such selection could weaken the vertical mainstreaming and that chairpersons could have lack of time to coordinate and manage National Thematic Networks. The appointment of external experts had also created some problems (e.g. in **HU**, **SK**) due to administrative problems (e.g. **HU**) and the choice of the right experts. The **CZ** evaluation team further pointed out in its interim report that external experts from individual National Thematic Networks were not paid for their work so far, thus any extra commitment, required by programme such as EQUAL, can not be expected from them. The Managing authority reacted and made the payment of external experts possible.

In **CY** only the leading organisation in the DPs are member of the National Thematic Network. The organisational background of the 7 DP leaders is highly divers; remarkable is the role of the Employers Federation and one Trade Union as DP leader. The **CY** evaluator did regret that the National Thematic Network was created very late and did not play an active role to support the DPs during action1 and 2.

In **MT** two members from each DP form the National Thematic Network. The evaluator and the national support structure stated that the exclusion of non-Equal partners was reducing the effectiveness of mainstreaming in **MT**. The low level of active participation of key actors of policy making was reducing the role of National Thematic Networks for vertical mainstreaming.

No thematic network activities were reported from **EE** where National Thematic Networks did simply not exist. Nevertheless, the Managing Authority stated that in the thematic area "Work and life balance" that there was some informal collaboration between the DPs.

To meet the challenges of mainstreaming especially for the vertical mainstreaming process some of the new Member States established additional mainstreaming groups, committees and other organizational bodies. In some cases central mainstreaming activities were contracted to external consultants or external academic experts:

- In **HU** a subcommittee for innovation and mainstreaming was in charge of the mainstreaming process.
- In **MT** an EQUAL mainstreaming steering group was established to supervise the National Thematic Network. The main deliverable is a policy brief. The formulation of this policy brief was subcontracted to a private consultant company but approved by the National Thematic Network and the mainstreaming steering group. This policy brief was the key output of vertical mainstreaming activities in **MT**.
- For the mainstreaming phase in **LT** 28 DPs got together into 5 thematic networks, each of which covered different areas of labour market and social inclusion policies. Every thematic network had its own management group. These groups consisted of representatives from DPs, municipalities, academic establishments and other stakeholders, potential beneficiaries and external experts. Management groups performed the following key functions: they established criteria for assessing innovative solutions suggested by DPs; they assessed innovation, eligibility and feasibility of solutions suggested by DPs; they provided recommendations to DPs concerning the improvement of solutions, products mainstreaming activities. The whole mainstreaming process in **LT** seemed to be well structured, the evaluators and the Managing Authority stated that the management groups became an important forum for discussions and that they did an excellent work.

Mainstreaming activities

The mainstreaming activities can be grouped in the following way:

- (a) **Meetings and working groups:**
Regular meetings of National Thematic Networks served to prepare mainstreaming activities, but can also be regarded as a platform for horizontal mainstreaming in itself. The **CZ** evaluator demonstrated in its interim report that the National Thematic Networks made progress in the frequency of meetings, the creation of working groups, etc.

According to the **PL** interim evaluation report, thematic groups were split into subgroups at an early stage of work, in a rather mechanical way, to try and sort out the varied subject matter of projects. It seemed that at this early stage of the National Thematic Network's work this split achieved its objective, but by the end of the validation period it was not fully suitable for the type of results and target groups declared by the partnerships. National Thematic Network's work was dominated by plenary meetings. These were quite frequent, mainly due to National

Support Structure's instructions stemming from the need to complete the validation on time. On average, these meetings were held not less than once a month. The Working meetings were assessed as very useful. Overall, the evaluation team assessed the operations of National Thematic Networks so far as very innovative and useful. The National Thematic Networks not only provided support to DPs for the preparations for Action 3, but also helped DPs refine their product concepts. Further, the evaluators stressed, that the huge organisational, logistical and conceptual effort of the National Support Structure's management and employees responsible for the networks, yielded overall good results. In **LT**, the events organised during Action 3 offered an opportunity for different interest group to learn about and discuss the solutions suggested by DPs. Overall, it seemed that the activities carried out by the thematic networks set the ground for EQUAL innovations to integrate into the national social policy.

(b) Information materials

In EQUAL a wide range of media to provide and disseminate information were used. Printed materials, CDs and Websites informing extensively about EQUAL activities and products are available in all the new Member States. A specific characteristic of EQUAL was the intensive use of advertising instruments to inform about EQUAL, like TV and Radio spots and advertising in the printed press. This is in so far remarkably as such instruments are not very common communication channels of social policy in the new Member States.

- The **CZ** evaluation team assessed in its interim report very positively the publication of documents from the National Thematic Networks' meetings at the ESF discussion forum. The documents contained agenda records and presentation of reports about the progress achieved by individual DP and also plans of project mainstreaming in some cases. According to the interview conducted with the Managing Authority in 2007, a clear benefit of the work of National Thematic Networks consisted in the peer reviews that were conducted.
- The outcome of these activities was that EQUAL was quite visible in the new Member States, so f. ex. the **CY** evaluator stated that EQUAL is better known than the ESF programme.
- In **LT** the report "New Ways into the World of Employment. Towards Equality and Non-Discrimination"²³ was produced. This report contained an excellent and comprehensive presentation of EQUAL results in **LT**.

(c) Organisation of conferences

The organisation of conferences was a central mainstreaming activity in most of the new Member States:

- In **CZ**, according to the evaluation team, three public events took place within the framework of activities of National Thematic Networks,

²³ EQUAL: New Ways into the World of Employment. Towards Equality and Non-Discrimination
The publication was developed by: Dr. Audronė Zubavičienė, an independent expert and consultant, and Inga Manelytė, a public relations specialist, Vilnius, 2008

focused on issues of mainstreaming strategy (April 2006) of individual National Thematic Networks, on the presentation of activities done by individual National Thematic Networks (October 2006) and there was an EQUAL conference (November 2006) as well. In addition, DPs were invited to the seminar „Innovation and mainstreaming“.

- In **CY** two important forums were organised. The National Support Structure stressed the number of high ranking participants among them the Minister for Labour and Social Insurance and the Head of the Cyprus Employer Organisation as well as the number of external experts and external participants.
- Conferences were frequently used as mainstreaming tool in **EE**. But the evaluators considered conferences as a failure as the participants believed that conferences were overused.
- No conferences or similar activities are reported in **MT**.

(d) **Lobbying political and administrative decision making processes**

Direct contacts with political and administrative decision makers to provide information and exert influence are a key strategy for vertical mainstreaming. Participation in parliamentary hearings, commenting legislative projects and formulating of policy recommendations was also seen as a strategic mainstreaming activity. These activities took place in most countries but were usually not systematically assessed in the evaluation reports. Examples of such lobbying activities were:

- In **CY** EQUAL results were presented to the parliamentary group subcommittee;
- In **LT** descriptions of the solutions were presented to appropriate departments of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour;
- In **HU** a presentation of EQUAL results was organised in the Ministry of Labour;
- In **SK** the employability network formulated recommendations for the next programming period. The gender network commented on a new legislation proposal.
- In **MT** the “EQUAL mainstreaming policy brief” was produced.

3.7.6. Mainstreaming Activities Organised by Managing Authorities

The active involvement of the Managing Authorities in mainstreaming activities was a key success factor for mainstreaming activities, especially when the Managing Authorities were part of a relevant policy making organisation for EQUAL themes.

The **CZ** report analysed the importance of the Managing Authority for action 3: All DPs were members of the National Thematic Networks. The 6 networks carried the main burden of the implementation of the mainstreaming principle and its implementation in practice. The National Support Structures should also have provided methodological support for DPs, but the functioning of some National

Thematic Networks in **CZ** as a support tool for mainstreaming had not proven to be always satisfactory

The Managing Authority was responsible for the overall mainstreaming strategy at programme level. This role was adopted by the Managing Authority for vertical mainstreaming. The Managing Authority coordinated all activities in the final stage of CIP EQUAL towards final recipients of vertical mainstreaming. This active role of Managing Authorities can also be stated for **LV, LT, MT** and **CY**.

But this active role was less evident in case the Managing Authority was not a relevant player in social and/or antidiscrimination policies, as f. ex. in **HU** where the Managing Authority was a governmental agency under the authority of the Ministry of Economics with general responsibility for European Funds.

Mainstreaming of EQUAL principles into the next ESF Programming phase:

The decision makers for national social policy were usually involved in the design of the national programmes within the ESF. So the vertical mainstreaming activities addressed at the key decision makers for national social policy were also decisive for mainstreaming EQUAL into the new ESF programming period. In addition to this there were some examples for vertical mainstreaming activities which had been exclusively organised to transfer EQUAL experience into the ESF programmes. However we were told in the case of **CY**, that due to delays in the implementation phase of EQUAL no concrete results were available when the ESF programming period was designed.

3.7.7. Implementation Problems of Mainstreaming

The synthesis of the national evaluation reports reveals that in some of the EU10 Member States it took a long time until decisions were made concerning the responsibility for mainstreaming activities, the structure of the process, who takes the leadership, etc.

As shown above, in most new Member States we could identify mainstreaming activities based on

- (a) Direct activities of DPs, including popularisation of results via printed documents, internet and other media and direct contacts. The DPs presented their results, but usually these results had not been subject of an independent assessment process.
- (b) A more structured and centralised process usually at National Thematic Network level, based on validated innovations and best practices.

At both mainstreaming levels a number of implementation problems were observed.

Implementation Problems of Mainstreaming at DP Level

- (a) At DP level, the main difficulties pointed out by evaluators and Managing Authorities referred to difficulties of DPs to understand the concept of mainstreaming.
- (b) As we have already shown, a further difficulty consisted in the integration of the right partners for mainstreaming purposes in the DPs or at least in action 3 activities. The weak involvement of political decision makers was mentioned in **HU**, **CY** and the participation of local authorities could have been more active.
- (c) Also the role of the employment offices could have been more constructive (e.g. **HU**).
- (d) A number of interviewed actors perceived that given the capacities of DPs for mainstreaming, a too high responsibility for mainstreaming was put on DPs (e.g. **HU**). The **CZ** evaluation team commented in its report that the national mainstreaming strategy and other programme documents left with the DPs a huge responsibility with regard to mainstreaming. It was argued that this approach could contribute to the “empowerment” of the DPs, but could also remain ineffective due to little experience of DPs. The **SK** National Support Structure argued during the interview that in principle mainstreaming at DP level could only be partly successful. The National Support Structure thought that the bottom-up process was one way, but not the only one.
- (e) In **PL** the Managing Authority argued that making mainstreaming operational and guiding DPs in preparing products for mainstreaming was difficult because of the short time of the programme period. This and the delays in programme implementation (lack of experience, bureaucratic complexity) resulted in action 2 and action 3 being for some time implemented simultaneously. As a consequence, DPs validated not actual solutions but descriptions of expected results. This distorted the dissemination process. Instead of focusing on concrete products, the resources went to advertising broad concepts and ideas, such as general equality and non-discrimination issues.
- (f) The **EE** evaluator reported that many DP partners were not aware of additional funding available for mainstreaming. This finding is strongly contested by the National Support Structures who argued that everybody was contacted and informed; the level of cooperation towards the end of the project was very high. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that **EE** had the lowest (10%) budget devoted to mainstreaming among Baltic States. In **SK** the DPs claimed that they were not aware of that mainstreaming activities are part of the EQUAL programme.

Implementation Problems at National Thematic Network Level

The analysis of the national evaluation reports as well as the interviews with the Managing Authorities revealed the following shortcomings of the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy at National Thematic Network level:

- (a) Late start of the setting-up of the operational National Thematic Networks so the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy at Programme level started late (e.g. **CY, EE, MT, SI**);
- (b) National Thematic Networks were not in all cases sufficiently inclusive (e.g. **CZ**: few social partners, researchers / thematic experts);
- (c) Clear and feasible strategies at national level were still missing in some cases;
- (d) The political interest in the EQUAL results seemed to be low in a number of new Member States. Consequently, the degree of networking with the political level was low;
- (e) In some new Member States, there was the problem of frequent government changes;
- (f) In **HU**, it might have been problematic for the mainstreaming that EQUAL was not any longer situated within the line Ministry (Ministry of Labour). A governmental agency, as part of the Ministry of Economics, was created who was in charge of EU programmes and the Managing Authority for EQUAL was shifted to this agency. This made administration more efficient but created a certain distance to the decision makers in labour and social policy in **HU**. The Managing Authority also saw a deficit in the general strategic orientation of policy making in **HU**;
- (g) The National Support Structure in **PL** stated that the strategy has been to involve policy makers early; this backfired as the policy makers that had been invited for a mainstreaming event had expected a far greater level of detail. This experience seemed to have derailed the strategy and prevented the National Support Structure from trying again;
- (h) The National Support Structure in **PL** admitted that it inadvertently allowed DPs to take the easiest and perhaps not most efficient route - popularization by adverts - as far as mainstreaming was concerned.

4. Assessment of Intermediate Impacts of EQUAL in EU10

4.1. Methodology of the National Evaluations

In the “Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007 – 2008” there was a consensus to focus in the final evaluation on the distinction between political, institutional and organisational impacts. However, the national evaluation reports analysed impacts only partially and only few evaluation reports classified impacts (e.g. **CZ, LT and LV**) as suggested in the common proposal. With the exception of only few new Member States the national evaluation reports were not providing information on the methods used to collect the information on impacts.

Policy impacts in form of legislative changes or amendments to existing law were only in few cases assessed systematically by screening the relevant documents and reports to legal acts. In case no systematic evaluation was made, we received information on policy impacts from the Managing Authorities. It can be assumed that Managing Authorities or the respective line Ministry have been overlooking the development of the law system in their competence field. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to assess the influence EQUAL had for the amendments of laws and creation of new laws.

Institutional impacts focused on the setup or change of institutions and on changes in the education and training system. Especially the information of impacts on the education system was often not based on a solid data base. In this respect some doubts concerning the correctness and completeness were justified. Furthermore, the borderline between “political impacts” and “institutional impacts” was often not clear cut (e. g. consider the case that a law is passed to set-up a new institution).

The organisational impacts were the most difficult form of impacts to assess. In general in the new Member States only very few impacts on employers and human resource policy have been reported. This was due to the fact that the collection of information on changes of the policy of private companies was a difficult process. But it was also stated by evaluators and Managing Authorities and National Support Structures that there were not much impacts on companies; improvements concerning the fight against inequalities and discrimination are based on a long and often slow process.

It has to be noted that some Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and national evaluators in the new Member States stressed in their reports and in the interviews the direct impact of EQUAL on the beneficiaries of the programmes. We summarised these findings below. Nevertheless, the EU10 evaluation team considers that impact on beneficiaries should be regarded as an outcome of the innovative products and in this respect should be regarded as quality criteria but not as a political, institutional or organisational impact.

The same holds true concerning the sustainability of EQUAL projects. Numerous examples were mentioned regarding projects that would continue without EQUAL funding. We do not consider the sustainability of projects as an impact in the sense of the “common evaluation proposal”. However, we also summarised these findings of the national evaluation reports in this respect.

In the following the example for systematic assessments of EQUAL impacts in **CZ** is given:

The assessment of impacts in CZ

The results of the transfer of individual products and innovative procedures in relevant legislation and public policies were analysed in the section dedicated to impacts.

The evaluation of impacts was performed by means of gathering responses to the following four questions:

1. How far did the Programme results lead to provable changes in relevant policies?
2. What are specific proofs of results at both the programme level and individual theme level?
3. What is the degree of the effect of the identified changes when fighting discrimination and inequalities in the labour market?
4. What is the degree of sustainability of such changes after the programme ends?

Answering the above questions presumed the finding of specific proof of the influence of CIP EQUAL outcomes on relevant policies. Such proof was searched for at two qualitative levels. The first level represented direct references in relevant documents to the findings acquired during the execution of CIP EQUAL projects (e.g. explanatory reports to legal acts). The second level represented information gathered from individual project executors and relevant location employees participating in public policy formulation.

Also in **LT** and **LV** the identification of impacts was very systematic. The evaluation process in **LT** involved searching for facts on the impact of innovations on the labour market-influencing institutions (e. g. Ministry of Social Security and Labour (SADM), Lithuanian Labour Exchange and municipalities) and the labour market-related processes. The **LV** report provided an impact evaluation for each DP. Nevertheless, the quality of the impact evaluation in **LT**, **LV** and **PL** suffered from the fact that in the reports no clear distinction was made between “realised” and “expected or potential” impacts.²⁴ The national evaluation report of **MT** focused on impacts on beneficiaries but referred also to one policy and one institutional impact.

The information on EQUAL impacts in **HU**, **CY**, **EE**, **SI** and **SK** is based on our interviews. So at this stage of the evaluation we had to rely on Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and the national evaluator that they got

²⁴ Only the CZ evaluation report is very clear in this respect. So it was stated that „Some of the impacts have not yet acquired the form of a specific legislation change. They mainly concern the establishment and the functioning of a social enterprise and the introduction of the paternity leave. It is therefore possible to state that CIP EQUAL has brought 8 “full-value” impacts on the public policy area so far”.

the general idea of the EQUAL impacts in their countries without a systematic assessment.

In some of the new Member States (e. g. **PL**, **CY** and **MT**) it was stated that it was too early even for intermediate impacts to emerge, due to delays in implementation of mainstreaming and that the political processes needed more time.

However, it was possible to provide for all EU10 States a list of intermediate impacts. These lists of impacts need to be treated with caution and no comparison between the new Member States as to the extent and volume of reported impacts should be made. Not only did assessments methods differ, but also the implicit understanding of what can be regarded as an impact of EQUAL differed.

4.2. Impacts on National Policy

4.2.1. Impacts on Legislation, the Design and Implementation of National Programmes

Impacts on national policy can be assessed in case EQUAL products resulted in changes in employment, inclusion and anti-discrimination policies at national, regional and/or local level. This included legislative changes, new legislation or amendments to existing laws, but also changes in the design and implementation of national programmes as well as changes concerning political processes.

Impacts on Legislation

In most of the evaluation reports or during the interviews examples for EQUAL impacts on legislation were presented. For some cases it was difficult to apportion the share of EQUAL to the legislative changes as it is in general a characteristic of political decision making processes that they are influenced from numerous political players and lobby groups. An isolated cause-and-effect chain is probably the exception for political decision processes.²⁵ Nevertheless, if available we also provided the information which EQUAL project of DP activity initiated the political impact.

The following examples for EQUAL impacts on national legislation were named:

- In **CZ** the transposition of experience in working with physically disabled, which integrates the employment preparation institute for persons with physical disabilities was settled in Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment (influenced by the project: Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life – partnership in a family).
- In **CZ** the social services community plan of the city of Brno (valid until 2009) includes the allocation of funds for measures aimed at preparing sight-impaired individuals to enter in the labour market (influenced by the project: The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society).
- In **PL** new regulations concerning “Personal Assistants to Disabled Persons” were reported.
- In **MT** a new governmental agency in charge of asylum seekers was created. This was influenced by the EQUAL Asylum Seeker project.

²⁵ This problem is only discussed in the CZ report: In CZ 11 impacts on six relevant public policy areas have been identified. The CZ evaluation team stated that in one case (the distribution of competences among employment bureaus and labour inspectorates) that the effect of EQUAL may be only considered as supportive because the subject change was discussed regardless of the existence of EQUAL.

- The **CZ** evaluation report mentioned the introduction of the option of the tax eligibility of costs spent for travelling to work by employees as a legislative measure to promote the reconciliation of family and professional life (influenced by the project: Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family)
- In **CZ** a draft amendment and recommendations concerning the newly formulated legislation on paternity leave was formulated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (influenced by the project: The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society).
- In **CZ** the introduction of Tele-working has been taken up (influenced by the project: Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family)
- In **CZ** the Social Enterprise Act – basic documents, was influenced by EQUAL (Project: Employment and educational programme for clients of the Halfway House in Velký Dvůr near Pohořelice)
- In **SK** the following amendments to the National Employment Services Act, enacted in 2008, were reported to have been influenced by EQUAL:
 - A. Introduction of a definition of social enterprises, allowing registration of social enterprises and for subsidies to social enterprises;
 - B. Introduction of the training allowance (pay while leaving employment for training purposes);
 - C. Introduction of an employment try-out period for the long-term unemployed – long term unemployed can enter employment for a trial period without losing their unemployment benefits;
 - D. A new definition of sick leave for the disabled workers in sheltered employment.
- In **PL** amendments to legislation on Social Cooperatives (Spółdzielni Socjalnych), i.e. co-operatives with a social policy function as its primary role, were made.
- In **SK** amendments to the Child Protection & Foster Care Act included the introduction of the allowance for the foster care children for the period of transition from foster care to employment.
- In **LT** the law on employment promotion was amended by including the victims of trafficking into the list of additionally supported public groups. (The project ‘Trafficking victims’ integration and re-integration into the working society in Lithuania’, whose partner ‘Missing people support center’ is the main provider of services to this target group in LT, has contributed to initiating the amendment)
- In **EE** it was reported that the Gamblers rehabilitation project influenced an amendment into existing laws, resulting in 1.5% of proceeds from gambling tax being now devoted to helping compulsive gamblers.

- In **EE**, the Farmers time off project influenced an amendment enforcing annual funds' allocations from local budgets for sponsoring farmers' vacation time off.

One clear impact of EQUAL is that new target groups have become a focus of social and labour market policy. A number of adjustments to existing legislation in favour of new target groups was executed or is planned. The examples on legislative changes concerned disabled, asylum seekers but also gamblers.

The regulation of the "social economy" is another area of legislative changes resulting from EQUAL projects.

The reconciliation of work and family is a further main area of legislative changes.

EQUAL Impacts on Political Processes and Administrative Capacity Building in National Programmes

EQUAL had intermediate impacts not only on concrete policy areas, the experience of the work with some EQUAL principles had also concrete impacts on political processes and on administrative capacity building in the new Member States.

Thus, it is noticeable that in the case of **CY**, the practice of self-evaluation was introduced in national Programmes. The National Support Structure had been very active in pushing this concept. Also in the case of **LT**, the EQUAL experience had a positive impact on the development of an evaluation culture. The Managing Authority gave the example of an evaluation which was carried out in the context of the Refugee Fund. The Managing Authority could give advice on the conduct of evaluation.

The use of the good practice validation tool developed within the Portuguese EQUAL programme is the most cited example for concrete and productive results of the transnationality principle in EQUAL. It is also an example for the sustainability of EQUAL results. So despite the fact that during EQUAL no attempt was made to identify good practice in **EE**, in the final interview it was reported that for future projects administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs the good practice validation tool from EQUAL Portugal was adopted. The Portuguese best practice evaluation system and methodology may also be used for national and regional politics for the development of human resources within **CZ**.

4.2.2. Outlook on Expected Policy Impacts

In the interviews it was often stated that the political decision processes are not finished yet, some legislative changes were expected in the near future.

- In the case of **LV**, we were told, that there was the intention to further implement the partnership principle in national programmes.
- In **MT** the National Thematic Network produced a policy brief on EQUAL results and political recommendations. This document was presented to the political decision makers. At the time of the evaluation no legislative changes or plans could be reported in **MT**, but it was stated that the policy brief could have an impact in the future.
- In **PL** the Managing Authority stressed that the following legislative changes, influenced by EQUAL, were expected in the near future:
 - Social Entrepreneurship Act, new legislation is pending
 - Amendments to Legislation on Social Cooperatives (e. g. cooperatives with a social policy function as its primary role)
- In **CY** the advisory board of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Trade Unions, Employer Federations and Government) is preparing an action plan for the “conciliation of work and life”. National Support Structures and the Managing Authority stated that this action plan is strongly influenced by results from the work of 3 DPs which were active in this thematic area. It is expected that EQUAL information concerning the needs for action in this policy field, the EQUAL experience with flexible forms of employment and EQUAL results concerning company and workplace requirements will influence this action plan. The Managing Authority and National Support Structures were confident that this action plan would be realised in the near future, nevertheless the evaluators stressed that there were still important obstacles to overcome.
- Despite numerous concrete proposals, there are so far little reported policy impacts in **LT**. The national evaluator sums up that none of the proposals were implemented until the autumn of 2008. Nevertheless, the **LT** evaluator claimed that it was likely that the EQUAL programme would provide an impulse to the changes within the legal basis pertained to persons with dependence on psychotropic substances. Realistically these amendments could be arranged and considered within two or three years. Changes within the application of the equal working opportunities model could be anticipated after three to five years. At best, a law would be prepared within two or three years. However it was stated that it was likely that its adoption and real application would require some more time.

The Effects of the Financial and Economic Crisis on the Implementation of EQUAL Results in National Politics

The effects of the financial and economic crisis in most of the new Member States of the European Union are even more dramatic than in the EU15 Member States. The economic basis of the majority of the EU10 Member States is still less developed, the financial basis of the private companies is weaker and the financial scope of the public sector is much smaller than in EU15. Despite the fact that in the crisis the EQUAL target groups would even need more support, due to the financial constraints new projects and programmes have almost no chance to be realised in the context of the crisis. On the contrary in **LV**, **LT** and **HU** the Managing Authorities and the evaluators stressed that the public budgets including the social budgets would be cut drastically. In **LT** for example it is planned to reduce the number of civil servants by 15 %. So, presently there is no scope for the extension of social programmes or even new programmes. Most legislative processes have been stopped. The financial crisis in the new Member States turned also into a political crisis a number of governments had to resign or lost elections. The political capacity for changes and reforms in social policy was drastically reduced.

However, most of our interviewees were confident that these processes were only delayed and not cancelled. But at the time of the final interviews (mainly from autumn 2008 to spring 2009) nobody was capable to make a prognosis for how long this situation would last.

4.3. Institutional Impacts

4.3.1. Changes in Labour Market Intermediation Structures and Processes

Impacts on Employment Services

Sustainable impacts on the organisation of the employment services have been reported only exceptionally. These impacts focused on changes in the information and placement functions. EQUAL projects contributed to the introduction or improvement of internet based information services.

- In **MT** the EQUAL project (“Equal opportunities”) contributed to the introduction of an unemployment register for those seeking part-time work.
- In **CZ** EQUAL had an impact on the distribution of competences among employment bureaus and labour inspectorates in the area of labour market supervision (influenced by the project: Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family).
- In **CZ** changes to the “Employment Agency Programme” were named (influenced by the project: Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring).
- In **HU** a systemized approach to the integration of mentally disabled and autistic people in the labour market, called “Active Workshop” was created. The project adopted a Spanish method (called Lantegi) to find the best matching persons and workplaces. The organisations involved are now in the process of establishing their model on the national level to increase the labour market participation of mentally disabled and autistic people (Project E/11).
- In **HU** the “Roma equal opportunities expert”, devised in project A/44, has been taken up by the public employment service to make it part of the National Register of Qualifications and to make it a profession.

For **LT** the institutional impact of the EQUAL programme was assessed as insignificant, there were no cases of the actual implementation of methods or recommendations concerning institutional changes. The **LT** evaluator claimed that this was due to a lack of skills and experience for influencing the labour market-influencing institutions. Smooth and equivalent partnership-based contacts with the labour market-administrating institutions were rare. In this context, some development partnerships’ comments are worth considering: ‘The labour exchange considers our project a competitor, and tries to harm rather than help’, ‘The labour exchange is not concerned about solving unemployment-related problems, because if there are no unemployed, there is no need for the labour exchange’s work’, ‘the labour exchange’s thinking is based on the budget.

It is concerned only about spending its planned budget, rather than focusing on the more efficient use of the state's financial allocations by cooperating with our DPs'. In the **LT** evaluators' view the labour exchange was not concerned with co-operation, and focused only on its own operational programmes.

Creation of New Institutions to Fight Discrimination and Inequality:

- The Managing Authority in **MT** reported that a governmental agency for asylum seekers was created.
- In **CZ** the implementation of the career consultant institute in Act No. 561/2004 Coll. was named (influenced by the project: Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged in the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation).
- In **CY** the Introduction of a certification system on "gender quality" of companies was reported to have been based on EQUAL findings.

Social Economy

It was stated that one of the decisive impacts of EQUAL was its contribution to the development of a "social economy". The social economy structures especially in the form of NGOs were less developed in most of the new Member States compared to EU average. This was especially emphasized in the reports from **PL** and **CZ** but this finding was confirmed in the interviews for all new Member States.

A decisive impact of EQUAL was that these structures - often in the legal form of private companies - proved to be sustainable and were able to continue their work. Examples for this are:

- In **HU** a social enterprise in one of the most deprived (North-Eastern) territories of Hungary was created. The project helped a small Roma community to learn different professions and start work in the construction industry. The project also created a workshop of smiths and a "fair trade" web shop, where their products were advertised and sold (Project A/64, www.equal-bridge.hu).
- In **PL** the new prominence of the social economy was stated by all key actors and they emphasized that EQUAL definitely contributed to this development.

Expanding Child Care Facilities and Promoting the Reconciliation of Working Life and Family Life

- In **LT**, a major impact was established by the development partnership 'Family planet: organization favourable to family'. The project aimed at the creation of favourable conditions for families. During the project implementation new measures for a flexible organization of studies and professional life were developed and implemented at Šiauliai University, a children's care centre was established. This approach will probably be multiplied.
- In **LT** the partnership 'FORWARD! Family and work – reconciled' was designed for the development and testing of models on the reconciliation of professional activities and family duties; one of the models is designed for rural areas, the other for urban communities. The innovation was to organise these services more flexible and provide a more holistic approach (organization of prolonged working groups, consultations provided, mutual assistance centres established, etc.).

4.3.2. Changes in the Education and Training System

Most EQUAL impacts were reported on changes in the education and training system (e.g. new officially recognised qualifications and curricula; new officially recognised modes of access etc.).

However, Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and national evaluators stressed that they had only partial knowledge to what extent their material and methods were used as lot if this information was published in brochures and on the internet. So in many cases they did not have feedback concerning the use of EQUAL products (so the National Support Structure in **CY**).

One area of impact consisted in extending the training courses and their contents, counselling schools and in setting-up curricula of new professions. Several educational and training programmes were developed in the course of EQUAL which have been utilised. However the number of developed programmes is larger and only a few new Member States took action to preserve all the results in a structured way to support sustainability. E.g. in **LT** EQUAL results are documented in a comprehensive way. This is not the case in all new Member States. Thus, the **EE** evaluator stated in this respect that the Managing Authorities could take more responsibility to keep the results in one place. Nevertheless, we present in the following a few examples that were reported to us or were named in the national evaluation reports:

- In **CZ** a draft complementing the amendment of the Act on Social Services and associated decrees was elaborated. It extends the offer of educational courses by adding the topic of social service management (influenced by the project: Development of social services).

- In **LT** education institutions were partners in 20 DPs. New skills learned during EQUAL projects have been used for the advantage of all students of those educational institutions.
- In **EE** the “Former sex-workers project” was involved in developing national guidelines for combating human trafficking (The Development Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings). The information and training materials developed by this project have been used in the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program.
- In **HU** the ‘Youth network’ created the model ‘New chance – comprehensive assistance for young persons’. They have started a database (including now approx. 300 schools) and a methodological counselling service to help ‘regular’ schools in adopting the methods they had tested and successfully used within EQUAL for the reintegration of young people with problems.
- In **HU** “IT mentor”, which had been the outcome of project A/16, was adopted by the National Register of Qualifications and is now a profession.
- In **CY** the position of gender quality experts were created in the “Open door” project. The project forms consultants for issues concerning the conciliation of work and family.
- In **HU** the project E/4 experimented a truly innovative solution to help nurses re-enter their profession after the (often quite long) period of maternity leave. The success of the project led the initiators to extend it to several hospitals in Hungary.
- The **HU** DP “One step ahead” was providing support for people who interrupted their education. The public employment service is now providing (financial) support to continue the interrupted education programme and get some degree.
- In **SK** the insertion of multicultural themes in primary and secondary schools’ curricula is named as an impact of EQUAL.

Impacts were reported in several new Member States concerning the use of EQUAL training materials and methods in **prisons**:

- In **HU** EQUAL training material is used by the central office of justice.
- In **EE** the ‘Start project’ directed towards prison inmates participated in the drafting of the development plan for specialized schools for this target group.
- In **HU** the initiative of the Training Centre of Penal Institutes has become very successful among detainees. The centre started a training programme which allowed detainees to finish primary education and

learn a profession. This is supported by a vocational school, which was a DP member. The partnership has been so successful that it was decided to continue training after EQUAL and extend it to other prisons in **HU**.

- In **LV** a system to support ex-prisoners was integrated in the social system.
- In **SK** training for about-to-be-released prisoners, focusing on basic law and teaching occupational skills sought after in the labour market (construction principally) was tested in an EQUAL project. This approach was adopted in other prisons in **SK**.

Impacts were reported in the area of training for disabled. The following example has been brought forward by the Managing Authority and National Support Structure:

- In **SK** an integrated (i.e. serving both mainstream and disabled persons) training program for the visually impaired focusing on the skills necessary to work as telemarketers has been adopted and is in use by the national agency for the development of SMEs. This agency was already a partner in the project on visually impaired.

Impacts on the training of asylum seekers and discriminated ethnic groups: The following two examples were mentioned in the national evaluation report and in the interviews with the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures:

- In **SK** a training program developed for Roma, “School of Second Chance”, received Ministry of Education’s official accreditation.
- In **EE** the National Integration Programme 2008-2013 has been influenced by results from the “Asylum seekers project”.
- In **EE** one reported impact consisted in that the Information Center for Human Rights has started legal counselling to illegal immigrants, which it did not do before.

4.4. Organisational Impacts

It seems to be a general problem that private employers were not sufficiently targeted within EQUAL. This holds true for the involvement in the DPs’ work but also for the mainstreaming process.

The **EE** evaluators stated in their report that “... too little attention was paid to employers target group”. The **EE** evaluators provided an employers’ survey to evaluate impacts. For this they questioned employers involved in EQUAL and a control group of employers without involvement in EQUAL. The stunning result

was that employers targeted for mainstreaming were less likely (by an over 20 percentage point margin) to consider hiring members of high-risk groups (disabled, former gamblers, ex-prisoners etc.) than a random sample of employers.²⁶

Impacts on Recruitment Policy

The national evaluation reports provide only few examples for organisational impacts of EQUAL on employers. Examples for changes in human resource policy are limited to single companies usually involved in EQUAL projects where they experienced to work with target group members and then kept these employees or continued to employ people out of this target group. The waste treatment company WasteServ Malta Ltd. was cited as an example for such a change in human resources policies. Only some cases were reported where selected groups of disabled could improve their position on the labour market. Obviously the group of the “deaf” were more successful in EQUAL than others. Changing recruitment policies for the deaf are reported from **LT** and **LV**.

In **CY** we observed a high involvement of private companies and especially the Employers Federations in the DPs work. Despite this strong involvement, **the** National Support Structure could only report that based on EQUAL products a new programme to certify the “gender quality” of companies has been launched.

Impacts on Further Training

For **LT** one example of a possible institutional impact can be presented in the area of further training at company-level: the Tripartite Council adopted a recommendation on “life long learning for elderly people”. These recommendations were included into the proposed guidance to social partners. The support of the proposal by the Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania proved the ability of the development partnerships’ proposals to influence the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (SADM) and the employers and trade-union confederations. However, so far no collective agreements containing the new provisions have been signed yet, due to the lack of a final decision on the financing body (employers/government) regarding the implementation of these provisions.

Awareness for Inequalities in Wage Formation

In **HU** an on-line database accessible (www.berbarometer.hu) was created to explore wage differences between women and men in the Hungarian labour market. The database is upgraded continuously and it can be used by trade unions, researchers and experts, as well as the general public to find out about payment levels in different professions.

²⁶ This finding has to be treated with reserve as the survey was not representative, large employers are probably overrepresented in the data base from which cases were drawn, the targeted employers might have understood „risk groups “differently than did the control group.

During the interview the National Support Structure in **CY** expected the expectation that EQUAL will influence the employers and make them more aware on discrimination and equality issues.

4.5. Impact on the New ESF Programming Period (and Other EU Programming Documents)

The EQUAL experience had definitely strong impacts on the new ESF programming period in the new Member States. As planned²⁷ selected EQUAL principles have become a central element in this programming period for most of the new Member States.

The following impact on the New ESF Programming Period in the new Member States can be identified:

- According to the **CZ** Managing authority, transnationality, the partnership and empowerment principles were taken over in the current Programming period. In each of the different priorities, there was the possibility for funding innovative projects. In order to capitalise the experience gained in EQUAL the **CZ** Managing Authority appointed experts for preparing studies on the experience with the implementation of transnationality, innovation, the partnership principle and mainstreaming. These studies were targeted to actors of the next Programming period. Furthermore, the self-evaluation guide elaborated within EQUAL will be used for the current programming period.
- In **LT** the partnership principle was mainstreamed in ESF. It was decided that a thematic approach would be implemented (in particular flexicurity and migration patterns would retain attention). As a consequence from EQUAL a stronger involvement of the private sector was planned. In **LT** gender mainstreaming, transnationality and innovation are principles in the present ESF programme and were important selection criteria for ESF projects. Transnationality would not represent a separate priority, but some activities were foreseen.
- In **LV** the partnership principle has been taken over. Further, innovation is an element in the new programming period.
- In the case of **EE**, in particular the concepts of partnership and horizontal mainstreaming were embraced for the next programming period. Also gender equality and distance working became core ingredients of that strategy. Further, innovation and transnationality will be elements of the next programming period. In **EE** Operational Programme for Human Resource Development has been impacted by five projects, principally by the inclusion of new target groups in the Programme (sex-workers, inmates, gamblers, farmers, distance workers, asylum seekers).

²⁷ According to interviews with the Managing Authority as well as statements made during the partnership meeting in Brussels on 29th of June 2007.

- In **HU** in the Social Renewal Operational Programme (2007-2008, 2009 - 2010) most of the EQUAL principles have been integrated. There are strong transnational and interregional elements and partnership and innovation is integrated in the programme. The Ministry of Labour stressed that empowerment is a selection criteria and gender is a horizontal principle within the programme. The Managing Authority stressed that in the new ESF programme for **HU** in most of the cases partnership is allowed. ESF in **HU** includes a special call on “Innovative experimental employment programmes” (SROP 1.4.3) dedicated to the further development and dissemination of EQUAL results.
- In the case of **MT** transnationality and innovation were taken over in the current ESF programming period. Applicants would get a bonus in the application process, if they show that their project includes transnational activities and that these activities can be expected to contribute to the development of innovation. Multiple partnerships are encouraged to participate.
- In **SK** it was planned that the transnational cooperation would be retained.
- In **CY** the transnationality principle was taken over in the next programming period.
- In **PL** the Human Capital Program is structured and phrased on the basis of EQUAL. All principles have been adopted, except for partnership.
- Impact on other EU structural funds programming documents can be observed in the case of **HU**: In the New Hungary Development Plan (2007 – 2013) measures to improve housing for the Roma population are included²⁸.

But the EQUAL experience is more than its key principles. EQUAL was often criticized for being a very complicated programme but nevertheless a great deal of learning in the area of project management could be realised. Thus, the **HU** Ministry of Labour stressed that in the preparation of the call for tenders, the implementation process and the selection mechanism, they have highly built on the experiences of EQUAL. The ESF programme does not only support innovative projects but also the implementation method is very similar to the one of EQUAL. The Managing Authority stressed that the selection process is two-rounded and the implementation consists of two periods as well: The first period is the preparation period and the second is the real project implementation period.

It needs to be stressed, that the new Member States differ in their judgement on the Partnership principle. In most of the new Member States the Partnership

²⁸ New Hungary Development Plan (2007 – 2013), National Strategic Reference Framework of Hungary 2007 -2013, Employment and Growth, p. 103

principle was seen as a key success factor to EQUAL. But **SK** Managing Authority and National Support Structure and to some extent the Managing Authority in **PL** expressed a less positive approach. So in contrast to most of the other new Member States, the Partnership principle is not required in the current ESF programmes in **SK** and in **PL**. In both countries it is believed that the partnership principle renders project management more complicated.

Less visible than the take-over of EQUAL principles but nevertheless highly important is the fact that former EQUAL staff is now ESF staff. So the EQUAL experience is preserved within the “institutional memory” of the key players in social policy issues in the new Member States. This finding holds true for all the new Member States where EQUAL was managed within the line Ministry dealing with Social Affairs. The “institutional memory” is probably less pronounced in countries where the European Structural Funds are managed in the form of agencies which are not integrated in the respective line ministries.

4.6. Impact on Awareness Raising for Inequality and Discrimination in the Societies of the New Member States

Although, impact on empowerment of target group is very difficult to measure there are examples that the “empowerment” experience created and enforced sustainable networks in the new Member States which are likely to raise the awareness for discrimination and inequality issues. Examples for awareness raising and an increased networking encompass:

- The work of the “deaf association” in **LV**: In the interviews it was stated that EQUAL contributed to the empowerment of the deaf and raised their influence on the LV society.
- EQUAL contributed to the idea to create a European Roma TV – based on the **HU** project in which young persons with reduced work capabilities or of Roma origin acquired a qualification and work experience in the media. There are plans to create an international Roma TV available all over Europe. The Foundation which aims at creating it has been established by **PL**, **SK** and **HU** DPs. With the support from EQUAL the Hungarian partner has built a small studio in Budapest, which could serve as a basis for operating the TV.
- In **CY** the experience with the EQUAL asylum seekers project raised public awareness. The National Support Structure and the national evaluator stated that this changed to some extent the general political opinion towards asylum seekers.
- The Ministry for Labour and Social Insurance in **CY** started the initiative for the creation of an EU network for youth unemployment.

4.7. Impact on Beneficiaries and the Sustainability of EQUAL Project Activities

As mentioned above the impact on beneficiaries and the sustainability of EQUAL project activities are not considered as policy, institutional or organisational impacts by the EU10-evaluation team as it is perceived as quality criteria of innovations. Nevertheless impacts on beneficiaries and sustainable EQUAL projects activities are in the focus of national evaluations so the results are presented in the following.

Impact on Beneficiaries

- In **CY** the National Support Structure argued that the main impact was that people were brought into jobs which would not have happened without the programme. For the asylum seekers it was an important experience when they were allowed to work.
- **MT** provided a “tracer study” on the participants, carried out by an external consultancy. As stated in the national evaluation report “the participants have become more employable”.
- Also the **LT** evaluator stressed that the decisive impact was the experience of the target group members, in the **LT** report it is stated that the impact of EQUAL projects often relates to individuals (how much individual persons learned from EQUAL) rather than on the educational institution itself. The impacts on beneficiaries are listed below, as this reflects an important issue in the national evaluation reports and the interviews.
- In **PL** the Managing Authority, National Support Structure and the evaluator pointed out the high success rate regarding programmes for workers aged 45+, for disabled and prison inmates.

Sustainability of EQUAL Project Activities

The new Member States listed a number of examples for EQUAL projects which would continue their work within the new ESF programmes or got additional funding from different sources:

- In **MT** the training project under the lead of “Wasteserv” (the MT waste treatment company) will continue its work.
- In **MT** the Housing Authority is continuing to support the beneficiaries of the “Headstart” project by subsidising their rents.
- In **LT** a positive example on sustainability was the DP “My Guru“. In the cafe ‘Mano Guru’ (‘My GURU’), the professional rehabilitation of former drug addicts was carried out. About 70 per cent of the café employees have had dependence-related problems and had completed the rehabilitation program within the drug addicts’ community. The cafe was financially self-dependent. After the completion of EQUAL programme it would continue helping integrating people with psychotropic dependency.

- In **LT** the non-governmental organisation 'Towards the open door' which was partner in the DP 'Social integration centre' continues dealing with ex- convicts, helping them to re-integrate into society. The 'Kretinga men's self-help centre' was set up by the partnership 'Re-integration into the labour market in the Kretinga region'. This organisation has also been helping former convicts. It will continue to function after EQUAL.
- In **LT** the public institution established within the partnership 'Moterų įdarbinimo modelis' ('Women's employment model') was based on the 'Home-Start International' method. The organisation will continue providing services after the completion of the EQUAL programme (financed by foreign sources). The essence of the model was to provide free-of-charge support to families (raising children) who experience temporary hardship.
- In **LV** the most successful sustainability can be expected for EQUAL results that are aimed at improvements of the educational system. It can be stated that almost all training programmes are being implemented and a large part of them have the necessary funding from the state.
- The **LV** the inter-institutional model of cooperation which was developed in the project „Open labour market for women” for rehabilitation and reintegration of human trafficking victims in the labour market is a successful example of sustainability. An interactive website about human trafficking will be financed and maintained by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia, so the sustainability of the activity is guaranteed.
- In **LV** the project “Step by step” is expected to be sustainable as the need to establish an efficient system for the integration of asylum seekers is acknowledged and state support will be provided for the implementation of the results.
- In **LV** the sustainability of the EQUAL project „Minimising reasons for occupational segregation” was not guaranteed in the moment of the final interviews. This project promotes entrepreneurship of women. In 12 start-ups 100 jobs have been created. The sustainability depends on the ability of the trained women to cope with the economic decline.

5. Assessing the Value-added of EQUAL

The assessment of the value-added of EQUAL was not included in the “Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007 - 2008”, so the national evaluation reports did not refer directly to the value-added or even tried to assess the value-added of EQUAL. However, some national evaluation reports included a general assessment of the entire EQUAL programme.

The assessment of “value-added” implicates that EQUAL might have delivered products that another programme or mainstream policy would not have produced. This question refers to the two main characteristics of EQUAL, the EQUAL principles and the laboratory approach of the whole programme. The answer of this question is mainly based on interviews with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures, but we also analysed the national evaluation reports concerning the general assessment of the EQUAL principles and the laboratory approach in this respect. It needs to be stressed that our interviewees in **EE**, **SK** and **SI** stated that they were not able to answer the value-added question.

5.1. General Assessment of EQUAL

The national evaluation reports and the interviews with evaluators and Managing Authorities and the National Support Structures gave some insights in the general appreciation of the Programme.

This general assessment of EQUAL in the new Member States was in most of the new Member States definitely very positive. A typical answer from evaluators and Managing Authorities was that they have been very critical in the beginning but then often surprised at the constructive and positive results of EQUAL (**LV**, **LT**).

“The EQUAL Programme was very successful compared to other programmes, regardless of the shortcomings highlighted in this evaluation report. EQUAL achievements in mainstreaming and the promotion of social partnership surpass any other previous European Union social programme”. (**LT** evaluation report)

“A central characteristic in EQUAL was the availability of time and financial resources to try new things in a different way. Also a much deeper discussion was possible. Evaluation is also a quite new tool in social policy. The holistic approach, the integrated policies and the multidimensional thinking allowed for a new quality of the discussion and improved the content of the projects” (**LV** evaluator).

The following EQUAL results can be seen as elements of the value-added of EQUAL:

Managerial capacity building was taking place at the level of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures (in particular in case there was low staff turnover). The Managing Authority in **HU** stressed in this context “new ways of management of social projects”, e.g. the use of implementation guides. EQUAL was characterised as “the higher education of European management”. Moreover, the idea of “learning networks” including openness and confidence were revealed as value-added. The Managing Authority in **LT** stressed that EQUAL was connected to the challenge to provide a **new quality in social programmes**. This high quality also resulted from the fact that EQUAL created a “competitive environment” (**LT** Managing Authority).

The **laboratory function** of EQUAL was in some new Member States definitely a new experience which offered the opportunity for new solutions, new target groups and different thinking. There are a number of examples in EQUAL that things are “done for the first time” and that in EQUAL some target groups were subject to specific measures the “first time”.

Despite many shortcomings in this respect – so f. ex. the analysis of the innovation process clearly demonstrates that the “testing” of innovative solutions was often not organised in a satisfactory way and the fact that the laboratory approach caused a lot of problems and frictional losses, the value-added of EQUAL was nevertheless connected to this laboratory function.

In the opinion of the **CZ** Managing Authority and the national evaluator EQUAL delivered products and mechanisms that another programme would not have produced. In this respect it was stressed that long term processes lead to long term impacts. In their view, EQUAL exerted pressure on changes. Although this was finally less successful than they hoped for, the fact that a project was capable to exert such pressure was regarded as a value-added.

For the National Support Structure in **PL** “value added consists in often unintended, unforeseen results of synergies, resulting from a unique configuration of institutions”. This resulted in raising awareness, in the spread of knowledge regarding how to run projects and in institutional development.

Raising awareness for inequality and discrimination was also in the view of the Managing Authorities in **MT** and the National Support Structure in **CY** a decisive value-added of EQUAL. In this respect the awareness for special target groups (e. g. asylum seekers) was emphasized.

Negative assessments concerning the overall programme focused on the negligence of the cost-effectiveness of products. According to the **PL** evaluation team, in the assessment of the mainstreaming potential it became clear that the institutions which could adopt and adapting EQUAL products and solutions were often not very enthusiastic. This was mainly due to the relatively low appraisal of their efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The programme was so far scored relatively low for its managerial efficiency. Also the **LT** evaluation team stated in

its report that due to the lack of the economic evaluation of innovations, it is unclear to what extent the innovations were cost-efficient.

Another central point of criticism concerned the administrative burden, EQUAL was often seen as somewhat “overloaded” with too many objectives at the same time and in some Member States the sustainability of EQUAL products and long-term impacts were not guaranteed. In the new Member States one has to take into account that there was not much experience concerning the management of European projects. Also in the public administration in the old Member States which have gathered much experience in project management over many years, EQUAL was considered a “challenging” programme. But from the point of view of its potential contribution to the development of the institutional capacity of the administration, this experience (including the failures) could turn out to be of great value.

5.2. Value-added of EQUAL Principles

The implementation of the **partnership principle** was regarded as the most important value-added of EQUAL. In particular the practice of sharing social responsibilities was innovative and most useful in the new Member States.

Furthermore, the implementation of the partnership principle permitted access to more expertise and knowledge. This view was explicitly expressed in **MT, LV, LT** and **CZ**. The Managing Authority in **HU** stressed that the partnership principle resulted in extremely useful connections between DPs and public decision makers. Our interviewees emphasized the network building due to EQUAL.

Moreover the partnership principle is connected with the strengthening of the so-called “social economy sector”. In the new Member States (with the exception on **CY** and **MT**) the importance of social oriented companies or NGOs was much less developed than in the old Member States of the European Union. EQUAL made an important contribution to the development of the social economy sector in these countries.

The partnership principle had also a qualitative aspect. So the National Support Structure in **CY** qualified the direct co-operation of the social partners in concrete projects as “unique”. The same finding holds true for the involvement of “new” target groups like drug addicts and people with psychological problems.

Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the **CZ** evaluator and the Managing Authority see problems related to the partnership principle when decision making and responsibility for this decision fall apart. A smaller group of Member States are more critical with regard to the partnership principle. **SK** and **EE** put eventually less emphasize on the partnership principle in the present ESF period.

The implementation of **transnationality** was generally perceived as bringing value-added. There was a real interest in learning from other countries’ experience. Within EQUAL we can distinguish two levels of knowledge transfer: the first is related to products (innovative solutions, methods, materials...) and the

second is related to project management. The latter was of high relevance in EQUAL and the most cited example in this respect is the Portuguese model to validate best practice.

The approach towards **innovation** was perceived overall as very useful for the new Member States' context. In particular the shift towards a stronger target group approach was regarded as innovative in most new Member States and helped to fill in policy gaps or helped the development of new policy areas. The focus on innovation was the reason that EQUAL almost inevitably delivered products that another programme or mainstreaming policy would not have produced.

The **empowerment principle** was always in some respect "neglected" within EQUAL. There are some clues that the empowerment principle showed tangible results - in the reports there were some concrete examples of empowerment of target groups e. g. disabled in **LT** and **LV**. Nevertheless, in the assessments and reports not much attention was addresses to the empowerment principle.

Only few interviewees referred to **gender mainstreaming** when asked for value-added. Despite the difficulties, the lack of awareness and many shortcomings which were decrypted in the **LT** report (as also in other reports), the evaluator stated that EQUAL promoted a better understanding of the gender principle. Also in **CZ** EQUAL contributed to more awareness on gender issues according to our interviews.

The value-added of the **mainstreaming principle** was based on the key concept of EQUAL to develop and test new things and then disseminate and mainstream the result into practice and generate political, institutional and organisational impacts. The idea of change and improvement was very ambitious. This approach made EQUAL a programme with higher standards than others. Although some observers would have expected more concrete results the value-added of EQUAL consisted at least in raising public awareness for discrimination and inequality issues (e.g. the National Support Structure in **CY** stressed that EQUAL reached the political decision makers, EQUAL was better known than other European Programmes and reached high acceptance in the public).

The synthesis of the nationalevaluation of EQUAL in the new Member States shows that the quality of the mainstreaming process and the impacts of EQUAL were somewhat disconnected. The sustainability of EQUAL products seems to be based first and foremost on the openness of the political decision makers for change, on the acknowledged need for change and the financial and administrative possibilities for change. Excellent EQUAL products and a convincing mainstreaming strategy - as for example in **LT** – did not have impacts as the country is struggling with budgetary and political problems. But also the contrary holds true. In some cases it was almost impossible to identify any mainstreaming activity, but the list of concrete EQUAL related policy impacts was substantial. This was the case in **EE** and to some extent in **SK**. Political will and budgetary possibilities form the decisive bottleneck for mainstreaming results. Good products, a good preparation and organisation of mainstreaming processes are decisive to reach impacts but in political processes

the so-called windows of opportunity needs to be open to make success possible.

The value-added of EQUAL concerning **evaluation** is somewhat ambivalent. Evaluation in the intensity as it was done in EQUAL was definitely new for most of new Member States. During the EQUAL process we could observe that in some Member States the evaluation requirement was taken up very seriously and used in a very constructive way. In **CZ** it was obvious that EQUAL made a decisive contribution to the development of an evaluation culture which was a quite new field of expertise for social policy. The same positive finding holds true for **LT**. But we also made the observation that evaluation was not always seen as an instrument which could be used in a constructive way by the Managing Authorities. So the value-added of EQUAL is that the new Member States at least made first experiences with the evaluation of social policy instruments to fight discrimination and exclusion.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Recommendations Made by National Evaluators

In their national interim evaluation reports the national evaluators formulated a series of recommendations relating to different levels of implementation. These recommendations were addressed to DPs, Managing Authorities and National Support Structures. Some of the recommendations responded to very specific problems encountered by single DPs. Furthermore, some recommendations were related to very particular settings and procedures in the new Member States. We focused on those recommendations which were of more general interest and indicate which lessons should be learned for the current and future ESF programme periods, in particular if they involve the development of innovative projects, the implementation of the partnership principle, the empowerment principle or foresee transnational activities. In the following we give an overview of these recommendations as they point to main weaknesses in the implementation of EQUAL.

(a) Recommendations addressed to DPs:

- Improving the implementation of the empowerment principle (e.g. **EE**, **CZ**; the **CZ** evaluators recommended a consequent participation of target groups at all phases of the project);
- Improving the implementation of gender mainstreaming (e.g. **CZ**, **EE**, **MT**);
- Increasing the effectiveness of transnational cooperation (e.g. by ensuring that all DP partners get appropriately informed about the results of transnational activities (**CZ**) or by motivating beneficiaries through an involvement in transnational activities (**LT**);
- Foster the involvement of strategic actors for mainstreaming purposes and
- Developing ways on how to conduct self-evaluation (e. g. **CZ**);
- Further recommendations formulated towards DPs called for organising work in a way that DP partners share responsibility and do not only fulfil their precise task like a simple service provider (e.g. **CZ**, **LT**).

(b) Evaluators generally formulate propositions for improving the management of the Programme:

Enhancing managing capacity of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures was addressed:

- In relation to staffing, in particular as regards the number of staff and the assignment of staff to individual DPs (e.g. **CZ**, **SI**, **SK**, **PL**).

Improving the monitoring system:

Recommendations on the improvement of the monitoring system at Programme level were made (e.g. **SI**, **CZ** and **PL**).

- The **SK** evaluator recommended on-the-spot visits at the end of the projects focused on the content and quality of project outcomes.
- The **PL** evaluator suggested improving the monitoring of costs at project levels in a way that would allow for distinguishing the expenditure on preparing prototype systems and the current cost of providing services to ultimate beneficiaries. Without this it would be impossible to assess the cost effectiveness of the solutions created.

Simplifying administrative procedures:

- In relation to the simplification of financial and administrative rules (e.g. **LT** in particular with regard to pre-financing of partners; **EE** with regard to changes in partnership composition and **MT** with regard to the budgetary flexibility to participate in more transnational activities than in initially planned and to alleviate the administrative burden).
- The **SK** evaluator recommended allowing for project extensions when the administrative requirements were met.

Increasing guidance activities towards DPs:

- Evaluators stressed that the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures needed to provide more guidance and individual consultation to DPs (e.g. **PL**), in particular as regards implementation of self-evaluation (e.g. **CZ, PL**), the development and implementation of innovations (e.g. **LT**) and the implementation of mainstreaming (clarify the concept, e.g. **EE**), provide support to DPs in their activities as they have not sufficient capacities).

Improving and actively implementing the mainstreaming strategy:

- The organisation of a more efficient and effective mainstreaming strategy represented an important area of recommendations e.g. for the **CZ** and **LT** evaluators. The **CZ** and **SI** evaluators claimed that no effective process was set in place to identify good practice. The **LT** evaluation team recommended using the networks to compare and evaluate the innovations. Further it suggested setting up a mainstreaming group. Finally it called for a more active involvement of the Managing Authority for implementing vertical mainstreaming.²⁹ It was advised that National Thematic Networks organise their work in smaller groups.
- The **EE** and **MT** evaluators generally recommended to start mainstreaming processes as early as possible and to include policy makers at an early stage.
- Conversely, the **PL** evaluators recommended postponing the deadline for submitting applications to action 3.
- The **PL** evaluator recommended collecting more data on the achievements of mainstream policies in order to compare them with

²⁹ As has already been shown these recommendations were taken seriously by the Managing Authority

EQUAL outcomes. This may help to increase the mainstreaming potential, as benefits of innovative solution will become more visible.

- The **CZ** and **PL** evaluators recommended the setting-up of regional mainstreaming networks.

Furthermore, national evaluators formulated in their interim reports as well as in their final evaluation reports recommendations for the current and more generally for future ESF programming period.

(a) **Recommendations of national evaluators for the current and next programming periods:**

- With the view of the current programming period the **MT** evaluator recommended in its interim evaluation report to pay special attention to the same target groups as in EQUAL.
- The **LT** evaluators assessed positively the organisation of EQUAL in a preparation and selection phase (action 1) and an implementation phase (action 2). They recommended in their final report for future implementation of European Programmes to organise a first phase for the selection of a long list of proposed projects. It would involve the respective situation analysis, specification of problem solutions and this could be used for attracting relevant partners.
- The **LT** evaluators recommended in their final report to establish in the project application phase an ex-ante cost-benefit assessment.
- The **LT** evaluators recommended setting stronger incentives in the future in order to promote the participation of the government and municipalities in social projects. An innovative programme would be yielding best results when government agencies and NGOs were jointly responsible for the effective use of social funding. Similarly, also the **CZ** evaluator recommended for programmes which adopted the partnership principle to develop an intensive collaboration between service providers, i.e. NGOs and the public and the private sectors.
- With regard to the implementation of the partnership principle in the programming period 2007-2013 the **CZ** evaluators recommended to limit the number of partners to those who effectively play a role for the project implementation.
- The **CZ** evaluators recommended in their final report to give equally access to non-profit organisations of different legal forms to grants (e.g. also benevolent associations, civic associations, subsidised organisations).
- The **CZ** evaluators recommended considering that clearly arranged decision-making process in the projects may boost the success of empowerment. Furthermore, it is recommended to include policy makers and/or public administration bodies and institutions in order to strengthen the empowerment principle.
- It is recommended by the **CZ** evaluator to provide more guidance for the implementation of the empowerment principle in the current ESF programming period.

- The **HU** evaluator recommended in its final report to make empowerment, in the sense of a real participation of the target group in the implementation of the project, a compulsory project level tool for all relevant forms of support in the current ESF Programme.
- Furthermore, the **LT** evaluator recommended adopting a mainstreaming process, which would involve a discussion of project results in Programme management groups.
- The conflict between innovativeness and mainstreaming potential becomes clear in the following recommendation: The **CZ** evaluators recommended in their final evaluation report that in future the project idea as such should first be discussed in networks and only if the concept gets enough support it should be implemented.
- The **CZ** evaluators recommended in their final reports to avoid in future Operational Programmes the use of a too sophisticated terminology and to better inform and guide organisations implementing the projects on the concepts used.
- The **CZ** evaluators recommended publishing more ESF-related information as well as project results on the internet.
- The **LV** evaluators recommended in their final report that the Managing Authority should widely publish EQUAL results.
- The **LV** recommended making sure that best practice approaches can continue to be implemented and mainstreamed.

(b) Recommendations for future evaluations:

- In general terms it was recommended by some national evaluators in their final evaluation reports to include cost-benefit assessments in future evaluations (e.g. **PL, CZ, LT**)

6.2. Recommendations of the EU10 Evaluation Team

Based on our synthesis work and under consideration of the recommendations of the national evaluators we can formulate the following recommendations. These recommendations are directed towards those actors who design, implement and evaluate social and labour market orientated European projects. As these recommendations are for new programmes we focus on the more general and strategic aspects of the EQUAL experience.

The Evaluation Process at Member State Level

- The intensity and quality of the monitoring and evaluation process differed widely across the EU10 Member States. This was to some extent hampering the synthesis work of the EU10 evaluation. Therefore, we recommend for EU-wide evaluations of European Programmes to assure the application of common minimum standards, including a common structure, common evaluation criteria as well as common qualitative and quantitative indicators in order to assure comparability and reliability of results achieved at local and national levels. In case the evaluation is organised at national level, the Member States should agree on binding evaluation criteria and indicators.
- Self-evaluation by those implementing European and national projects should represent a management tool and should be considered as such. In this respect promoting self-evaluation is likely to increase the management capacities of the different organisations implementing projects. However, EQUAL has shown that guidance on how to conduct self-evaluation is needed.
- Self-assessments should as much as possible be crossed with the views of other - and best with external - actors. This is particularly important in the context of the evaluation of innovation.
- The conduct of case studies including on-site-visits and intensified interviews with a multitude of actors involved in the design and the implementation as well as with beneficiaries is an important source for understanding processes. It is advisable to use case studies in addition to documentary analysis (and surveys) in particular in the context of qualitative evaluation.
- The definition of a frame of reference for the evaluation of innovation would be useful: this should include the scope of innovation, defining the benchmark, etc.

Programme Management Capacity

- The Managing Authorities should make sure that they can devote enough resources to follow-up and provide guidance for the implementation of European funded programmes.
- There is a general tendency in the Member States to centralise the management of European Funds and other European projects in one Department or a Governmental Agency. This is probably more efficient concerning administrative processes but it creates a certain distance between the administrative level and the operational level. The commitment to European Programmes and projects in the line Ministries is weaker if they are not regarded as “their” projects. This is a general challenge for the design of projects and programmes. To strengthen the commitment of the line ministries the EU10 evaluator recommends focusing more on the interests of the national policy. The incentives for the Member States to participate in such EU programmes should not be dominated only by financial aspects; the value added for national policy should go beyond financial considerations.

Partnership

- The development of a cooperation culture based on shared responsibility takes time but it is valuable to be pursued in future Programmes.
- In case of inexperienced partners and new forms of partnerships or partners which have no experience in working together it is necessary to have a common understanding concerning the role and responsibility of the different partners and to implement clear decision structures. The partnership approach does not contradict the implementation of clear decision making processes and a clear distribution of responsibilities.
- The EU 10 evaluation team shares the view expressed in particular from the **CZ** and **LT** evaluator that a strong involvement of public authorities in the partnerships is a precondition for success. The same holds true for the recommendation to limit the number of partners to those who effectively play a role for the project implementation.

Empowerment

- As it was shown in the synthesis report the basis of problems related to the implementation and also the evaluation of the empowerment principle is that empowerment was understood and interpreted in different ways. The concept was very ambitious but also the labelling “empowerment” was difficult to understand or to translate in the

national languages. This is especially regrettable, as the empowerment principle showed, despite the shortcomings, positive results. The EU10 evaluation team is convinced that in the New Member States EQUAL contributed to the “catching up” process to EU standards concerning the formation of social structures, the formation of organisations, interest groups and also the social economy. All this is also related to empowerment.

- In case of the introduction and testing of new and somewhat sophisticated concepts more guidance at all levels would bring better results. The EU10 evaluation team recommends to promote furthermore the empowerment idea but to make it more operational and understandable.
- In addition we recommend more support in case the target groups are highly marginalised and have no organisations defending their interests. We also recommend the encouragement of administrative bodies and public authorities to develop a more positive attitude towards the empowerment of marginalised groups.
- More concretely, it is recommended to promote the involvement of target groups in the development and implementation of measures. This is valuable for both sides: it permits the target group to have a voice and it helps to improve the products delivered by projects as the beneficiaries bring in their knowledge on the needs and problems of the specific target group and might help in reaching-out the whole target group.

Transnationality

- In case transnationality is implemented in the current Programme period, it should be borne in mind that the preparation phase of transnational cooperation is crucial: the choice of the “right” partners with regard to the potential for learning as well as the work programme should be thoroughly prepared. The organisation of peer reviews and study visits are useful and organisations implementing projects should foresee enough financial resources for this type of exchanges.
- It should be kept in mind while designing transnational projects that the learning from transnational exchange takes various forms and leads to different results: direct contribution to the project or indirect effects through the learning. The objective of transnational cooperation should be clear at the beginning.

Gender Mainstreaming

- EQUAL has shown that the implementation of gender mainstreaming, which should be regarded as a horizontal objective in many national

and European projects, is most difficult as there is little awareness about gender inequalities.

- The monitoring of gender mainstreaming should not only be based on participant quota.
- Furthermore, methodological tools for the implementation of gender mainstreaming are often not known. Therefore, the different types of organisations running projects will still need intensive guidance on gender mainstreaming. This will be important for the current and next programming phases.
- It is recommended to use the EQUAL gender mainstreaming guide elaborated by the European Commission in the context of EQUAL, also in the current ESF – Programming phase. Furthermore, it is recommended that Managing Authorities give guidance on how to better implement gender mainstreaming on a bilateral basis.

Innovation

- There is no doubt about the need for innovation in social policies issues. There are a number of examples that EQUAL produced innovative products of high quality and brought awareness to the problems of new target groups. So the EU10 evaluation team recommends continuing to focus on innovation in EU programmes.
- The analysis in this report showed weaknesses concerning the validation process of the quality of innovations and the selection process of the best practices. We would strongly recommend spending more effort on the validation of the quality of innovations.
- In general, the development of innovative solutions demands more flexibility than mainstream projects: failures are possible and re-adaptations of methodologies and work programmes as a consequence of the testing might be necessary.
- In order to evaluate the innovativeness of a project it is recommended to take stock of the relevant mainstream policy approaches and to compare them with the innovative solution.

Mainstreaming

- In case the development of innovative solutions are going to be funded, it is advisable to strengthen mainstreaming processes at all levels by trying to involve as many political actors as possible (including social partners) at the national and at the regional level.
- It is recommended to involve the Managing Authority in promoting vertical mainstreaming.

- It is recommended to develop a mainstreaming strategy well at the beginning of a project or programme. This includes also a clear defined process on the identification of good practice as well as on the creation of a good practice database which should remain on the internet (or other accessible media) well after the completion of the Programme.
- The creation of thematic networks proved to boost horizontal mainstreaming and working in networks should also be promoted in the current programming phase.
- It is recommended to check whether networks structures already exist, where the presentation and discussion of projects and their results can be discussed and shared with other organisation. New network structures, such as thematic groups following the approach chosen in EQUAL, should only be set up if no adequate network structures already exist. We support the recommendation of the **CZ** and **PL** evaluators that the setting-up of regional networks is useful, where no adequate network structure already exists.

Recommendations on impact evaluation

- EQUAL was a very ambitious project concerning the expectation to provide tangible impacts beyond the projects and project beneficiaries and to influence national policy in a sustainable way. As we demonstrated in the report EQUAL engendered these types of impacts in some cases.
- However, the national evaluation reports analysed impacts only partially and only few evaluation reports classified impacts as suggested in policy, institutional and organisational impacts. In this respect also the national evaluation process should have met very high standards. To reach these standards more guidance would have been necessary. If in similar projects the evaluation is organised on national level we would recommend not only to provide more guidance for evaluators and managing authorities but also provide some possibilities for exchange between the national evaluators to make common standards in the evaluation process possible.
- It is recommended to determine the methodology for the impact evaluation at an early stage of the project life cycle in order to determine the methodology, e.g. if there is a need for following-up participants or beneficiaries after completion of the measure or the project it might be necessary to agree on this at the beginning of the Programme.

Annex: EQUAL Impacts in the EU10 Member States (As presented by national evaluators, National Support Structures and Managing Authorities)

In the following we present the lists of impacts, sorted by the new Member States. These lists were taken from national evaluation reports, provided in the interviews or sent on request by Managing Authorities, National Support Structures or national evaluators (the respective sources are indicated).

For the analysis and classification of impacts carried out above in chapter 4 we only selected the most appropriate examples of impacts. Here we provide the complete lists of impacts to illustrate the whole range of intermediate impacts the new Member States reported either by the Managing Authorities, national support structures or national evaluators. However, we had to process some of the country lists to reach a common minimum standard of what can be regarded as impact. Nevertheless, also these processed lists still illustrate that there is no common understanding on what can be regarded as an impact.

CY Impacts

(Source: Interviews with Managing Authority and national support structure)

- The advisory board of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Trade Unions, Employer Federations and Government) is preparing an action plan for the “conciliation of work and life”. National support structures and the Managing Authority stated that this action plan is strongly influenced by results from the work of three DPs who worked in this thematic area.
- Creation of quality experts in the “open door” project. The project forms consultants for issues concerning the conciliation of work and family.
- The Introduction of a certification system on “gender quality” of companies is based on EQUAL findings
- The Ministry for Labour and Social Insurance started the initiative for the creation of an EU network on youth unemployment

CZ Impacts

(Source: National evaluation report)

Draft legislation amendment

Transposition of experience in working with the physically disabled, which integrates the employment preparation institute for persons with physical disabilities in Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment

Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009 – allocation of funds for measures aimed at preparing sight-impaired individuals for entry in the labour market

Project name

Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family

The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society

Distribution of competences among employment bureaus and labour inspectorates in the area of labour market supervision	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life – partnership in a family
Changes to the “Employment Agency Programme”	Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring
Implementation of the career consultant institute in Act No. 561/2004 Coll.	Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged in the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation
Draft complementing the amendment of the Act on Social Services Act and associated decrees. Extension of the offer of educational courses by adding the topic of social service management.	Development of social services
Social Enterprise Act – basic documents	Employment and educational programme for clients of the Halfway House in Velký Dvůr near Pohořelice
Draft amendment and recommendations concerning the newly formulated legislation on paternity leave for the MoLSA (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)	The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society
Introduction of teleworking	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family
Introduction of the option of the tax eligibility of costs expended on travelling to work by employees	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family
Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, and Act No. 48/1997 Coll., on public medical insurance – amendment of mobile specialist palliative home care	It is normal to die at home

**EE Impacts
(Source: Managing Authority)**

- Gamblers rehabilitation project – amendment into existing laws, resulting in 1.5% of proceeds from gambling tax being now devoted to helping compulsive gamblers.
- Farmers time off program – amendment enforcing annual funds’ allocations from local budgets for sponsoring farmers’ vacation time off.
- Distance Work for Estonian Islands’ dwellers project provided some input into the coalition agreement (and this is expected to result in legislative amendments).

Other social policy development impacts in **EE**:

- The “former sex-workers project” was involved in developing national guidelines for combating human trafficking (The Development Plan for Combating Trafficking in

Human Beings). The information and training materials developed by this project have been used in the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program.

- The National Integration Programme 2008-2013 has been influenced by results from the “Asylum seekers project”.
 - Other impacts in EE are that the Information Center for Human Rights has started legal counselling to illegal immigrants, which it did not do before. In the DP Mothers at Work new standards for child-care professionals’ certification were developed. The impact is that professional child care services are now partly funded by county governments.
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HU Impacts

(Source: Information provided by the national support structure)

- “Roma equal opportunities expert”, was taken up by the Public Employment Service to make it part of the National Register of Qualifications and to make it a profession (Project A/44)
 - Roma coordinators at schools all over the country (Project E/23)
 - Support for prisoners to prepare for release. EQUAL training material is used by the central office of justice.
 - The DP “one step ahead” is providing support for people who interrupted their education. The public employment service provides (financial) support to finish the interrupted education programme in order to catch up some degree.
 - “IT mentor”, which has been the outcome of project A/16, has been adopted by the national register of qualifications and is now a profession.
 - The initiative of the Training Centre of Penal Institutes has become very successful among detainees. The Centre started a training programme which allowed detainees to finish primary education and learn a profession with the help of a vocational school, which was a member of the DP. The partnership has been so successful that they have decided to continue training after EQUAL and extend it to other prisons in Hungary.
 - Project E/4 has experimented a truly innovative solution to help nurses re-enter their profession after the (often quite long) period of maternity leave. The success of the project led the initiators to extend it to several hospitals in Hungary.
 - The ‘Youth network’ created the model of the ‘New Chance – Comprehensive Assistance for Young Persons’. They have started a database (including now approx. 300 schools) and a methodological counselling service to help ‘regular’ schools in adopting the methods they have tested and used successfully within EQUAL for the reintegration of young people with problems.
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LT Impacts

(Source: National evaluation report)

- The law on employment promotion was amended by including the victims of trafficking into the list of additionally supported public groups. (The project ‘Trafficking victims’ integration and re-integration into the working society in Lithuania’, whose

partner 'Missing people support center' is the main provider of services to this target group in Lithuania, has contributed to initiating the amendment)

- A positive example of sustainability of an EQUAL project is the DP "My Guru". In the cafe 'Mano Guru' ('My GURU') the professional rehabilitation of former drug addicts is carried out. About 70 per cent of the café employees have had dependence-related problems and have completed the rehabilitation programme within the drug addicts' community. The café is financially self-dependent. After the completion of the EQUAL programme it will continue helping integrating people with psychotropic dependency.
- The non-governmental organisation 'Atvirų durų link' ('Towards the open door') of the development partnership 'Socialinis integracijos centras' ('Social integration center') continues dealing with former convict problems, helping them to re-integrate into society.
- 'Kretingos vyrų savipagalbos centras' ('Kretinga men's self-help center') was set up by the partnership 'Reintegracija į darbo rinką Kretingos rajone' ('Re-integration into the labour market in the Kretinga region'). It will continue to function after EQUAL. This organisation is also helping former convicts.
- The public institution established within the partnership 'Moterų įdarbinimo modelis' ('Women's employment model') was based on the 'Home-Start International' method. The organisation will continue providing services after the completion of the EQUAL programme (financed by foreign sources). The essence of the model is to provide free-of-charge support to families (raising children) who experience temporary hardship.
- Elements of the model proposed by the development partnership 'Šeimos planeta' ('Family planet') is used at Šiauliai University (various social measures facilitating a more flexible reconciliation of the family and professional life).

LV Impacts

(Source: National evaluation report)

Policy impacts:

- „Fostering employment of the disabled”. Although the project had a variety of outcomes, mainstreaming at the national level policy can be regarded as successful. Even though not all the recommended legislative acts and normative documents have been accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers and recommendations for the Law of Disability accepted by Saeima in the period of evaluation, these suggestions have been supported by the Ministry of Welfare which is the main policy maker for social inclusion and coordinator in Latvia, therefore a further progress can be expected.
- In the project „Minimising reasons for occupational segregation” documents concerning the strategic development of four Latvian municipalities were analysed from the viewpoint of occupational segregation and gender equality principles. The recommendations are of interest to the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government. Therefore it can be foreseen that municipalities will apply the conclusions and recommendations made and update the analysed strategies by integrating the aspects of gender equality and elaborating annual plans for employment.
- It has been observed that a part of the EQUAL project outcomes have impact on policy making processes as new mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between governmental and municipal institutions and NGOs (Examples are the projects: “Computer and internet training for the unemployed in Latvia” and “New solutions to facilitate the employment of former prisoners”).

- Within the project „Open labour market for women”, an inter-institutional cooperation model was developed and introduced for rehabilitation and reintegration of human trafficking victims in the labour market, which provides better mechanisms for the cooperation between the state, municipalities and NGO. The aim is to ensure an overall restoration of the human trafficking victims’ social, psychological and economical skills and abilities.
- The support to ex-prisoners was integrated in the social system.

Institutional impacts:

- Strengthening the capacity of organizations. The Latvian Association of the Deaf has strengthened its capacity in the following fields: experience in transnational environment and working groups; supplementary experience in project management; improvement of self-organizational skills of the community.
- A successful model of cooperation is presented by results of the project „Computer and internet training for the unemployed in Latvia”. Within the project motivation and training programmes were developed and are being implemented by a number of institutions: professional education institutions and e-training centres for adult education, the State Employment Agency organises training courses for unemployed, for employers who improve their staff’s professional qualification, for the state, for municipal institutions and enterprises which introduce and promote new electronic services, and the in municipalities – for training of residents.
- The organizational system of educational and employment services for the disabled has been improved. As a result of the project „Fostering employment of the disabled” implementation, professional rehabilitation services for people with different disabilities have been facilitated by improving the organisation of the employment services.

Impacts on the system of education:

- In the project „Minimising reasons for occupational segregation” within the framework of career preference and educational sector, an extensive methodological and informative basis for improvement of the career preference system has been developed which can be applied in schools in order to provide career education, as well as in programmes of professional Master’s degree and activities of the State Employment Agency and the State Education Development Agency. To provide sustainability of the project outcomes during evaluation period of the projects, discussions take place between the Department of Career Services at the State Employment Agency and the Department of Career Services at the State Education Development Agency regarding dissemination and repeated printing of materials developed in the project.
- Within the project „Open labour market for women”, two innovative methods of further education were introduced: first, the study circles – the method which involves every participant of the group in the process of cognition and discussion to acquire the professional literature and define the direction of themes to be covered and, secondly, the network of practice companies – it is a network of simulated companies formed by the women under guidance of the company’s coordinator. Involving women in study circles and the network of practice companies, the possibilities for career preference and professional development for women in Riga and regions were improved and as a result, the women have started their entrepreneurship, they have found the work and taken the opportunities and resources available in the surroundings to improve their living conditions. Both methods were recognized as progressive by the EQUAL mainstreaming policy group and the State Employment Agency has given a positive evaluation for the network method of practice companies

and is currently looking for possibilities to integrate this method at the State Employment Agency in training programmes for the unemployed.

Impacts on employers

- As a result of several EQUAL projects, involvement of target groups in entrepreneurship has been facilitated. For example, results of the project „Open labour market for women” have increased possibilities for career preference and professional development for women in Riga and regions involving women in the network of practice companies. As a result, a number of women have taken up entrepreneurship, and within the project „Minimising reasons for occupational segregation”, 12 women have established their companies.
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MT Impacts

(Source: National evaluation report)

- In MT the EQUAL project (“Equal opportunities”) has contributed to the introduction of an unemployment register for those seeking part-time work.
 - Creation of a Governmental Agency to improve the network of organisations working with asylum seekers (result of EQUAL 7 project)
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PL Impacts

(Source: Interviews with Managing Authority and national evaluator)

- Pending legislation processes:
 - Social Entrepreneurship Act,
 - New regulations for personal assistants to disabled persons.
 - Completed legislation processes:
Amendments to Legislation on Social Cooperatives (Spółdzielni Socjalnych, i.e. cooperatives with a social policy function as its primary role
 - Training programmes for the target groups “45+”, for disabled and prison inmates are widespread used.
 - EQUAL contributed to the prominence of social economy in Poland
 - Incubators for start-ups in Silesia are using the results of EQUAL projects.
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SI Impacts

(Source: Interviews with national support structure and national evaluation report)

- New professions defined by DPs were formally recognised.
 - New legislation changed the conditions concerning the access to the labour market for asylum seekers.
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SK Impacts

(Source: Interviews with Managing Authority and national support structure)

- An integrated (i.e. serving both mainstream and disabled persons) training program for the visually impaired focusing on the skills necessary to work as telemarketers has been adopted and is in use by NADSME – National agency for the development of SMEs. This agency was a partner in the project on visually impaired.
 - A training program developed for Roma, “School of Second Chance” received Ministry of Education’s official accreditation.
 - Training for about-to-be-released prisoners, focusing on basic law and teaching occupational skills sought after in the labour market (construction principally). This approach was adopting in other prisons in **SK**.
 - Amendments to the National Employment Services Act:
 - A. introduction of a definition of social enterprises, allowing registration of social enterprises and for subsidies to social enterprises;
 - B. introduction of the training allowance (pay while leaving employment for training purposes);
 - C. introduction of an employment try-out period for the long-term unemployed – long term unemployed can enter employment for a trial period without losing their unemployment benefits;
 - D. a new definition of sick leave for the disabled workers in sheltered employment.(These amendments were enacted in 2008)
 - Amendments to the Child Protection & Foster Care Act:
Introduction of the allowance for the foster care children for the period of transition from foster care to employment.
 - Inclusion and anti-discrimination policies at national level:
Formation of the government’s Action Plan on Roma population was influenced by one of the DPs working on Roma issue; DP was directly included into a task force.
-