

BUILDING ON DIVERSITY - A COORDINATED APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM ADDICTION OR PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

In the Ennepe-Ruhr district of North Rhine-Westphalia (abbreviation: "EN" and hence the strange spelling of DevelopmENT), the Social Affairs Departments of the local communities, the Coordination Office for Employment and Qualification, the District Health Authority and more than 30 other key actors in the labour market have engaged in a new approach to structuring their cooperation. The objective of this EQUAL project is to open up new access routes to work for the long-term unemployed who suffer from mental health problems and/or toxicomania, alcohol abuse. This partnership offers guidance and marketable qualifications and provides individualised support to help men and women achieve a more stable personal situation, which is a prerequisite to regaining their self-esteem and self-initiative.

Long-term unemployment, exposure to drug addiction and mental health problems - when all of these factors combine, they generate the worst possible conditions in which to re-enter employment. Many people who are concerned are caught in a vicious circle where their lack of qualifications and severe personal problems coincide with the disappearance of simple, structured jobs that could have offered low threshold access to the local labour market.

AIMS AND BACKGROUND OF THE DP

DEVELOPMENT

The flower, which is commonly called "forget-me-not" has the botanical name of [Myosotis](#) and this is also the name of the Transnational Partnership for which DevelopmENT provides the secretariat. The inclusion of the flower in the project's logo is indicative of the partners' shared concern about the **target groups** of the DP that are long-term unemployed who are affected by dependency illnesses, drug abuse and/or severe psychological and mental health problems and whose income is dependent on the social assistance system. The situation of these individuals is characterised by the fact that public support for social and labour market integration reaches them only to a very limited extent or not at all and, in turn, they hardly ever seek such support. Statistics on the size of these groups are not readily available but estimates indicate that somewhere between 700 and 7000 people in the Ennepe-Ruhr district suffer from alcohol and/or drug addiction and about another 500 suffer from behavioural disturbance by mental health problems.

Step by step integration into work

DevelopmENT is piloting a new strategy to engender more effective cooperation and coordination between the different public and private services and agencies in the fields of employment, social assistance and health that hitherto operated quite separately. Through a step by step process, the DP aims to bring the most disadvantaged and "hard to place" groups closer to the labour market, by:

- supplying individualised advice and support to help them stabilise their personality and structure their daily life;
- offering training and personal assistance leading to placement in paid employment;
- providing structured work experience or work in the secondary labour market, as an induction to the requirements of working life

The DP seeks to achieve these aims by introducing new approaches into the work of the local services and agencies and developing new pilot actions to cover gaps in the existing provision throughout the district.

The approach: Outreach action and networking

The basic concept that drives the DP's approach is that the target groups can only be addressed by pro-active, low-threshold action that recognises the multi-faceted problems affecting them and also responds to their very different individual needs. Such action needs to draw on, and combine, the resources and special expertise of different services and agencies in the area and cover both employment and therapeutic support.

Particular efforts are being devoted to coordinating outreach activities aimed at contacting and informing the target groups, assessing their needs, and encouraging and advising them to make use of the services and pilot projects (see 2. below) of the DP that appear to be best placed to offer effective help. This process is facilitated through personal mentoring/tutoring and case management, provision of childcare and the development of an integrated system to document needs and opportunities. These flanking activities are also backed up by specialised staff training.



In parallel, intensive information and outreach activities are also directed at employers in the DP's area who generally have little experience of employing people with psychiatric problems and special needs.

Another innovative element of the DP's activities lies in coordinating and centralising the placement activities and the active search for job opportunities that suit the target groups.

Crucial to the success of the approach is close cooperation and networking between all the operational and strategic partners in the DP.

Operational partners are those who are directly involved in working with the target groups and these are the five pilot projects (see 2. below), the District Health Authority and the DP's managing organisation. Strategic partners are the many agencies and organisations that contribute to the implementation of the DP's approach by providing co-funding and/or advice and policy support in the design, coordination and development of the actions of the DP, or by referring their "clients" to the special services and opportunities that the DP offers. These partners include: local Social Assistance offices; local Employment Agencies; Chambers of Craft, Industry and Commerce; Trade Union organisations; training providers; and psychiatric and other relevant departments of the district's hospitals.

A Steering Group involving both strategic and operational partners promotes and supervises the work of the DP. Special Working Groups are in charge of carrying out/coordinating central and transversal tasks such as outreach activities, job search and placement, staff training and the development of the documentation system, while one partner in the DP has the responsibilities for evaluation and coordination with transnational partners.

ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Pilot projects

DevelopmENT launched five distinct pilot projects at the beginning of 2003 and they now offer different types of support to the target groups.

- **Job-Direkt** provides comprehensive support for the direct integration of "hard to place" individuals into employment in the primary labour market. The project caters for recipients of social assistance funding who face particular personal problems such as users of drug substitutes, (ex)-offenders, abstinent alcoholics or people with learning difficulties. Its main innovative feature is linking placement in paid employment with individualised assistance on the job. The project's activities include: matching job profiles with the capabilities and needs of potential candidates; developing individualised plans

for integration and personal support; and work induction, tutoring and qualification measures at the work place. Job-Direkt operates in close cooperation with, and complements the work of, the local employment offices.

- **BEAM** or Berufliche Eingliederungs- und ArbeitsMaßnahme (Vocational Integration and Work) combines employment measures with therapeutic support and provides the interface between clinical psychiatry and (re)-integration into employment. The project's activities are aimed at people with mental health problems and/or problems of substance abuse. They include training and qualification in the fields of domestic economy, horticulture and office/administration; development of social competencies; and work experience placements. Under one and the same roof, BEAM also provides living accommodation for people with mental disabilities alongside its training workshops.
- **AFRA** or Alleinerziehende Frauen (Female Single Parents) addresses these mothers who face severe personal and psychological problems. Individual advice and psycho-social counselling, organisation of de-centralised contact and discussion groups, tutoring and personal assistance and training modules combined with work induction measures are all parts of the integrated support package that the project offers to its clients.
- **Arbeitschancen** (Opportunities for Work) is targeted at social welfare recipients who are facing particular social problems. The project uses recreational activities as a first step to motivate them to become involved in subsequent activities that aim to enhance the participants' employability. The latter range of activities provides opportunities to gain practical and theoretical qualifications that may open up chances for employment in the fields of metal working, care services, domestic economy and mobile maintenance and repair services. The project also offers training in applying for a job and using local services that can offer support and assistance in finding employment.
- **Engagement** offers paid work contracts to long-term unemployed who are affected by a combination of different types of disadvantage. These contracts, which are for 25-30 hours of work per week and can last up to one year, aim to provide a bridge to employment in the open labour market. The project is managed by a social pedagogue and a social worker and operates like a temporary employment agency, with the Folk High School acting as the employer. Assignments include work that is of public value such the cleaning and renovation of districts in the city or of its parks and public buildings and, to a much lesser extent, temporary jobs in local enterprises. To develop the participant's capabilities and increase their chances of integration into a permanent job, the project also organises work experience placements, training for job interviews/applications and activities that enhance the individuals' motivation and self-confidence.

The work in all five projects is supported and facilitated by a number of transversal or flanking activities (see below).

Transversal and flanking activities

Reaching the target groups and motivating them to make active use of the opportunities that the project offers is a common concern of all partners in the DP. Potential participants are contacted or informed in different way. It could be through the local social assistance offices and advice centres, by information activities (leaflets, brochures, press and events) and/or in direct contacts established by social workers. Based on individual interviews and assessments, those who respond and have the potential for (re)-integration into employment receive a "tailored" recommendation on the type of steps that they should take and practical help and support for their participation in the appropriate project or activities. After the first outreach campaign at the end of 2002, almost 500 people applied for the 90 places that were then available in the five pilot projects. However, the strength of the links between the DP partners made it possible to offer other types of opportunities and support to about 250 of these candidates who were not successful in gaining one of these places. Whilst only vague information existed at the start of the DP about the number and needs of potential workers who were excluded from the labour market, this initial "recruitment" process provided the first step towards a more structured monitoring of the DP's target groups.

Case conferences are organised to find appropriate solutions for clients such as those living in a state of neglect, who face particularly difficult situations. Each conference involves experienced staff from the local social assistance offices and the pilot projects together with the individual concerned.

Convincing and mobilising employers, and especially SMEs, to provide job opportunities for disadvantaged groups are major transversal tasks that complement the work of the pilot projects. The DP has developed a set of arguments that draws on the expertise of, and is validated by, key institutions and actors in the business world. It uses these arguments to explain to employers the benefits that diversity based recruitment practices could produce for their companies. The DP has also established standards to improve the quality and procedures of the placement process. These arguments and standards are communicated to employers using face-to-face contact, information materials (leaflets, posters, manuals and reports), lectures and e-mail campaigns. The DP seeks to have a presence at all possible meetings, exhibitions and events where there is a chance of encountering employers. It also offers direct support to enterprises in handling issues that may emerge from the employment of disadvantaged people. Representatives of employers' organisations are involved in the advisory board of the DP and help to guide and promote its strategies geared towards employers and SMEs.

An **interactive communication and information platform (Projectplace)** provides up to date, on-line information on common tasks, activities, events and deadlines to all operators in the DP and this is complemented by a [website](#) that is publicly accessible.

Other transversal activities are concerned with the **childcare** facilities that are made available to the participants/clients of the pilot projects, special thematic events aimed at improving **the knowledge base and the qualification of staff** involved in the operation of the DP and the continuous evaluation of pilot projects and all of the transversal or flanking activities.

Networking

The innovative aspects of the DP are to be seen primarily in its networking approach, which brings together key actors from the fields of health, social assistance and employment that hitherto tended to operate separately from each other. The idea of the development partnership, either geographical or sectoral, which is a central element of EQUAL, provided both a major incentive and a conceptual underpinning for the project's approach. The main benefit that DevelopmENT is yielding for the Ennepe-Ruhr district lies in the coordinated and more effective **delivery** of integration services for people who are affected by severe, multiple disadvantage.

In terms of a policy impact, it is expected that this multi-agency cooperation will be sustained, as a feature of mainstream provision within the regional context.

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Within the [Myosotis](#) Transnational Partnership (TP) DevelopmENT cooperates with partners from the Netherlands ([DIFFERENT, NL-2001/EQA/0077](#)) and Spain ([STELLA, ES-ES505](#)), and it provides the secretariat for this TP.

Two major interests are shared by all three partners:

- How can cooperation between employment, social and health services be improved in order to offer comprehensive individual integration pathways to people with severe multiple disadvantages?
- What strategies are most effective in mobilising and motivating enterprises in each of the DPs' territories to provide employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups?

The TP organises exchanges of experience and joint development work through seven thematic working groups on:

1. **Information Management**

The Spanish partner has developed a database to match information on the target groups or potential job applicants for enterprises. Similar experience exists in DevelopmENT. The TP is currently exploring possibilities for further development and transfer to/use of the database by all partners;

2. **Diagnosis and assessment adapted to specific target groups**

The Dutch partner offers experience in this field which can be used by the other partners for the training of their staff;

3. **Methods for the planning of integration pathways**

Production of a handbook for staff training on methods of case management and of tutoring/supporting people with psychical illnesses at their workplace. Based on the

particular experience of the Dutch partner, a transnational training workshop will also be organised for staff from all the partner projects;

4. **Motivating the target groups**
Joint development of a staff training module on this topic;
5. **Motivation of employers**
Further development of strategies and instruments for "social marketing", based on the pilot work of the Spanish partner;
6. **Qualification in the field of New Technologies**
The Spanish partner is preparing a handbook containing practical examples from all three DPs;
7. **New forms of cooperation between different support systems**
A transnational symposium is being prepared by DevelopmENT to share and compare its experience with the other partners.

The practical transnational cooperation commenced in 2003, but most of the activities of the working groups will take place in 2004.

INVOLVEMENT IN ETG1

The coordinator of the DP, Dieter Schulze, participated in the [Initial Workshop](#) of the EQUAL European Thematic Group on Employability, (ETG1) in Birmingham, in June 2003. He has agreed to chair the ETG1 Working Group on "[The Involvement of Employers](#)" that will identify [promising practices](#) and develop messages related to strategies for mobilising and motivating enterprises to provide new employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups (please see the conclusions of the [first meeting](#) of the Working Group).

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