

BUILDING COOPERATION BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND MIGRANT ASSOCIATIONS

Communication and cooperation are the foundations on which the Finish project Promenio has built bridges between migrant non-profit associations and the public employment services in Turku.

Turku is a city of 175 000 inhabitants, a place of sea and islets. *“The migrant populations increased dramatically in the 1970s, when Albanian Kosovars and Russians of Finnish extraction started to settle here,”* explains Ulla Grönlund, head of the Equal project. *“In Turku, the unemployment rate for Finns is 7%, but it goes as high as 26% for immigrants,”* she adds. *“The employment offer in the city is higher than the demand, but often the available jobs are linked to maritime activities and require very specific training.”*

Throughout the 1990s, numerous migrant support organisations came into being. However, these associations, which are often very small in size and have very limited resources, had not managed to develop regular links with the local authorities. This is the context that made Promenio’s concept necessary: setting up a network and training to build solid cooperation and efficient communication between national employment agency officers and 60 migrant support organisations.

“There were many obstacles in setting up this cooperation, despite the good intentions and fine words. Communication was necessarily difficult,” says Ulla Grönlund. *“This is easy to understand if you just consider the working hours: administrative officers work from 8 am to 4 pm, and volunteers working for the associations do so outside of normal work hours: at night or over the weekend.”*

To make the encounters easier, Promenio organised training and seminars in the evenings. *“The seminar’s theme is not the only thing that counts. For us, the coffee break is just as important. It’s the time when people can meet and talk... it’s essential to our work,”* Ulla Grönlund explains. *“People drink coffee, and then the work is easy.”*

The migrant associations were also presented in various forums, and they were able to demonstrate their know-how. Two large regional umbrella associations were formed, each regrouping twelve or so small migrant associations.

“Maybe we did not find the philosopher’s stone or lead a revolution... but we managed to get some people together,” Ulla Grönlund concludes.

Today, it is clear that the approach is working. Ulla Grönlund mentions concrete examples: *“Migrant organisations are now present at the municipal council during the monthly meetings between the head of immigration and the representatives of the public employment service. After the holidays, the telephone didn’t ring any more. This was an important sign for us: they knew each other now and no longer needed us!”*

[Extract from the [Portraits of Experience](#) that were provided as resource material for the EQUAL conference on [Acting against Ethnic Discrimination in Employment](#), in November 2007.] See also: [Promenio PPT presentation](#).

Contact

Ulla Grönlund
 PROMENIO - Third sector Labour Professionals
 Employment Office of Turku-International Services
 Linnankatu 52 B, 20100 Turku, Finland

Tel.: +358 10 6043042

Email: Ulla.Gronlund@mol.fi

<http://www.promenio.net>

Link to [EQUAL database description](#)

[Transnational Partnership](#)