

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN ETG 4

Experiences and Achievements of Transnational Partnerships

1. ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents the work of the [European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities](#) (ETG 4), which was undertaken in 2005 and focused on the good practices developed by EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) working on the themes of gender equality: desegregation, gender mainstreaming and the reconciliation of private and professional life for women and men.

The 36 DPs which have contributed to this report belonged to the first generation of projects and are now involved in the 2nd Round of EQUAL. Together, they identified the impact of their EQUAL transnational activities on the achievements which they were able to generate “at home”. Details of the contributions of the two working groups can be found on the EQUAL extranet:

- [Transnationality boosts gender equality](#)
- [Cross-Border Reconciliation in ETG4](#)

This report covers the key components of the successful strategies for transnational work that have enabled projects to improve gender equality performance not only within their EQUAL partnerships but also in a wider sense, influencing policies and practices at local, regional and even national levels. The main chapters focus on the following central aspects:

- [Setting up and managing Transnational Partnerships](#)
- [Preparing to get going](#)
- [Implementing the work programme](#)
- [Transnational Work to support Mainstreaming](#)

2. SETTING UP AND MANAGING TRANSNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

2.1. FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER(S)

Obviously finding the right partners is the first step in setting up a transnational partnership and this key stage was supported by the availability of the EQUAL database (ECDB). Although the database did not always contain enough information on the aims and intended activities of the new EQUAL projects, all of the DPs reported using it, either to find their partners or to be found by them. Several problems of timing had to be faced in the 1st Round since the DPs which were entered last in the database discovered that all the other potentially interesting projects were already matched, others lost their potential partners when those failed to be selected for Action 2 and some starting and finishing dates were not compatible. In the end, some DPs felt compelled to enter into partnerships that were somewhat different from their original expectations. Based on this experience and some changes in the scheduling of applications, the 2nd Round ran much more smoothly. In the 2nd Round, DPs also used their previous contacts, these being either their initial partners or projects identified in the 1st Round at a stage when it was too late to enter into a formal partnership.

2.1.1. Similarity or complementarity

The majority of the DPs felt that the most important priority when embarking on a partner search was to formulate the criteria in such a way that their national activities would benefit from the Transnational Partnership (TP). With this in mind, the importance of having similar aims, means and activities as opposed to being complementary featured prominently in the discussions. In some cases the decision was clear from very beginning:

Based on its 1st Round experience with @CCEDE, the Spanish [Proyecto Alborada](#) defined the following selection criteria to identify its new generation of partners:

- *Mixed DP membership – public and private – to match its own profile: municipalities, trade unions and SMEs;*

- *Projects working in a non-profit context. This was due to its unsatisfactory experience in previous ESF Initiatives where the partners' objective was to sell their products;*
- *Similar problems addressed – work-life balance measures in companies – but with a different approach, as in Germany;*
- *Countries that were expected to be more advanced than Spain on changing gender stereotypes, such as the Netherlands.*
- *Partners who agreed to spend money on simultaneous interpretation, so that local members of the DP who, unlike the project team, did not all speak English could also participate in, and benefit from, transnational activities.*

TCA's – R1: [FLEX@ction](#) – R2: [Jumping Barriers](#)

The Dutch DP [Bridging the Gender Gap](#), which involved four universities, started looking for partners with one very firm criterion – it wanted to work with universities. This made it easy to select partners. A second criterion narrowed down the possible choice of partners even further: their focus should be on women in science. In Round 1, these strict selection criteria resulted in a TP with only one other partner, which proved very satisfactory. In the same way as the first project, the 2nd Round DP [Participatie van vrouwen als Prioriteit voor wetenschap](#) was approached by projects that had all gained a lot of transnational experience the 1st Round, which made things even easier. The new TP [Equality by degree](#) consists of three more partners, all universities (Bnl, ESP and the UK). During the process of putting the TP together, the Belgian partners reported that they were often encouraged by their National Support Structure to take on additional partners that did not meet their strict criteria. However, TP members agreed that such requests would be sent on to their Dutch colleagues, who were prepared to say, “No, this DP does not meet our criteria”.

TCA's – R1: [Divers@](#) – R2: [Equality by degree](#)

During the 1st Round, the Danish DP [Youth, Gender and Career](#) found that, for various reasons, its TP had evolved to cover issues which were no longer at the heart of its priorities. As a result, the choice of partners was much more strictly focused for the 2nd Round, using the following criteria:

- *English speaking;*
- *The same focus area, or at least one focus area out of 3 in common: Gender, Ethnicity and Guidance;*
- *The same target group: 16-25 years old migrants, ethnic groups similar to those present in Denmark; immigrants from Turkey;*
- *Partners involved in research as well as practice – preferably partners who work in a kind of “laboratory” where theory and practical life-experience meet;*
- *A similar project duration;*
- *A maximum of 3 partners, involved in only one Transnational Cooperation Agreement (TCA).*

TCA's – R1: [Equal Voices](#) – R2: [Choices](#)

Another Spanish DP, [Deloa 1](#) and [Deloa 2](#), made the case for choosing partners from across the different Themes of EQUAL. In their case, Gender Equality and Entrepreneurship were two complementary aspects of a global approach to rural development, hence their choice of partners to work on their Adaptability project. One of the more practical concerns was to secure active partners, so as not to end up with sleeping ones.

TCA's – R1: [TEAM](#) – R2: [WIT “Women innovating tourism”](#)

Should partners be “similar” or “complementary”? If the potential TP consists of organisations which have worked together before, it can be very fruitful to build a transnational partnership from DPs whose activities are complementary. However, if everybody is new to each other, it seems better to look for partners with similar activities.

2.1.2. A win-win situations for all local partners

An EQUAL DP consists of a number of smaller or larger public and private organisations and institutions, each with its own objectives, identity and agenda. Their reasons for joining EQUAL are usually quite different and this is reflected in their attitude towards, and appreciation of,

transnational cooperation. Some DPs went to great lengths to ensure that all partner organisations could benefit from cross-border cooperation.

The English DP [JIVE](#), whose lead partner Bradford College has long standing experience in Transnationality, advocates this principle: “For us it has been different between Round 1 and 2”, says Ros Wall, the DP coordinator. “In both rounds, we were clear that we wanted a TP in which all of the members of our DP could participate fully. We wanted more than a token involvement, we wanted to ensure that all the organisations on the DP could benefit from and contribute to the TP.

In Round 1, we were particularly looking for partners from whom we could learn and with whom we could get good discussions going. In [Round 2](#), we were looking at new Member States as well, and we find that at the moment, we are giving a lot more than we are receiving. Later there will be an exchange of information, but at the moment it is about us sharing with all the other DP partners.”

TCAs – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [Equality by degree](#)

In Berlin, FCZB, the lead partner of [Gender Mainstreaming in the Information Technology](#) followed by [DiverCity](#), ensured that in both Rounds, all the sub-projects and all the local partners were involved in TP activities: providing input and having the opportunity to learn from their transnational partners

In [Round 1](#), they decided to reflect at transnational level all the issues and approaches of the DP and its numerous sub-projects. With partners from Finland, France and the UK a number of themes (“strands”) were agreed to be at the heart of transnational activities. This made it possible for most of the project’s operational and strategic partners to be involved. Since the DP worked using a comprehensive approach, which combined desegregation, gender mainstreaming and reconciliation strategies, it asked its transnational partners that were focusing almost exclusively on desegregation to arrange for additional “counterparts” to meet the representatives of the work-life-balance and flexible childcare sub-projects.

In [Round 2](#), the DP aims to develop gender-diversity products and procedures, including a gender-diversity knowledge management system, a gender diversity audit and criteria for gender diversity-based distribution of public funding. All operational and strategic partners are involved in this endeavour. Consequently, the project tried to find transnational partners with a comparable approach and therefore an orientation towards product development was the key factor for selecting transnational partners.

. TCAs – R1: [Breaking the barriers](#) – R2: [Pro\(e\)quality](#)

3. PREPARING TO GET GOING

3.1. GETTING ORGANISED

The number of partners seems to have played an important role in the way that the TPs organised their work: with 1 or 2 partners, they could all work directly together. However, with 3 partners or more, they tended to divide their activities into sub-groups working on specific issues. As might be expected, drop out rates were higher and sleeping partners more frequent in the larger TPs.

Collaborative tools such as extranets did not always meet the expectations of the Reconciliation DPs: in [UC – Universes of Conciliation](#) only the coordinators used it and in [ATTIVA I TUOI TEMPI](#) the knowledge management database arrived somewhat late in the life of the TP. The experience of a common website had not been very positive for [Equal Voices](#) in the 1st Round in that everybody could upload their own papers, and this resulted in too many documents and a lack of focus. For the 2nd Round, [CHOICES](#) TP the partners agreed to have a single web mistress to manage the Steering Group agenda and the minutes and presentations on the site that were accessible to Steering Group members by using a special password.

3.1.1. Resourcing transnationality

Transnationality requires specific qualities and skills for effective management and follow-up. Participation in earlier Community Initiatives and other European programmes has enabled many

EQUAL DPs to take up this challenge successfully and make the most of transnational activities. An important insight gained over the years is that transnational cooperation is not something that the project coordinator can deal with in addition to all her/his other responsibilities, especially in large DPs with many strands and sub-projects. However, the recruitment of a transnational coordinator could only be achieved in well funded DPs.

Appointing a part-time Transnational Coordinator was the solution adopted by [Jive](#) to ensure that transnational activity was relevant and engaging for every partner at national level, and that they were all involved in, and carried out, the agreed tasks. This meant assisting those partners whose domestic work left them short of time to deliver their transnational commitments. Other duties included:

- *Supporting the evaluators' work by ensuring the distribution of questionnaires and feedback material;*
- *Coordinating visits, setting agendas, ensuring representation by partners, hosting events and supporting project staff in caring for beneficiaries.*

For the [2nd Round DP](#), the transnational coordinator produced a set of simple guidelines, which outlined the benefits of transnational work for the partner organisations as well as for the individual staff members and project beneficiaries.

TCAs – R1: [Gender & Technology: From Early Childhood Education to Harmonious W-L-B](#) and [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [Equality by degree](#)

3.1.2. Establishing efficient working structures

Most TPs set up a transnational Steering Group as the decision-making body for their transnational partnership and three forms of leadership have been used by the DPs:

- Rotating leadership;
- Shared leadership on specific issues;
- Single leadership: particularly in countries where the principle of rotation was not allowed by internal national rules.

For the [FOGAflex](#) DP in Luxemburg, rotating the secretariat seemed to be the appropriate solution at the beginning of the TP, to promote the idea of equality among the three partners who did not know each other at that point. All of the responsibilities (i.e. invitations, reports, meeting deadlines) were transferred on a set date, with each partner taking the lead for the same length of time. The experience was so positive that it was proposed, and accepted, for the 2nd Round partnership. Marco Deepen, the DP coordinator, underlined the fact that the first secretariat is the most important because it is responsible for launching the work programme and setting the pace for the whole project.

TCAs – R1: [Accueil de l'enfance](#) – R2: [Improving Childcare](#)

The rotations were organised on a 6-month basis during which each partner tried to push forward their own theme, such as the "reconciliation week" run by [Viver](#) in Portugal, during the first part of 2004.

TCA – R1: [European Cities Network for Conciliation](#)

Rotation was also the rule in the [Gender & Technology](#) TP, with the largest DPs – [Jive](#) and [WomenIT](#) – taking the lead for two periods. In [WomenIT](#), each manager was entrusted with her/his own field of transnational responsibility. Specific strands were coordinated by the DP most experienced in the issue.

*TCAs – R1: [Gender & Technology](#)
and [From Early Childhood Education to Harmonious W-L-B](#)*

Under the leadership of [TEMPORA](#), the organisational model for managing the transnational project was a matrix system, organised by theme / activity / country. Spain ran the secretariat which was responsible for overall coordination, the closing event, the publication of results and the evaluation. Each country led a Working Group with a specific objective and developed the agreed product or action to achieve the common transnational aims. All three countries participated in each Working Group.

TCAs – R1: [TEMPORA](#) – R2: [Vertex for equity](#)

3.1.3. Language and intercultural issues

It is no surprise that all DPs reported that language was a key issue in transnational cooperation. Whilst in most cases, project leaders had a relatively good command of one foreign language (if not more), this was not always the case for team members on the ground and even less for the participants in the DPs' steering groups and member organisations. Choosing English as the *lingua franca* was the most common solution, but this was not always without problems. Interpretation had to be provided for larger meetings, in particular those involving policy makers or a wider audience such as dissemination events.

The Austrian [F&Mpower](#), now [Job.Plan](#) set up a TP with [ACE National](#) in the UK. As the project leader, Elke Beneke, puts it "Although we've learned English at school, we need more than daily English in this context; we need specific terms in the field of reconciliation and family care. When we started to work transnationally, colleagues felt very insecure about using their level of English to communicate with native English speakers. At the end of the project and at the beginning of the second round, we were very happy that this was no longer a problem."

The resolution of the problem did not happen by chance: support was provided by both the British colleagues and by the Austrians with the best language skills and native speakers also helped to develop good quality products in English. The DP offered a well-attended crash course for trainers and multipliers participating in its working groups. Special language support was also provided during these transnational meetings.

Finally, last but not least, one of the most useful transnational products was also a result of the language barrier: together, TP partners produced a glossary of more than 1.800 terms used in social care in EN, DE, ES, FR and IT.

TCA – R1: [EMPOWER](#) – R2: [Bridging the Gender Gap](#)

Transnational cooperation always has an intercultural dimension and several DPs recognised that their members of staff were not always adequately prepared for this. In some countries, the NSS provided training that introduced project managers to intercultural work, in others it was up to the DPs themselves to either run such a programme or to buy it in from a promoter specialising in the issue.

Within the [M.E.T.](#) TP, the partners from [France](#), [Italy](#) and [Spain](#) organised several intercultural training activities to improve communication, knowledge and common understanding. These activities were organised together with steering group meetings or seminars. The first event took place in Pamplona, where an expert explained cultural differences and similarities between European countries, their different working cultures and ways of learning to overcome intercultural misunderstandings. At a seminar in Paris, participants were organised into small groups and introduced to various games that aimed to foster team spirit and cooperation. Besides these practical activities, lectures were provided on topics such as differences in communication styles, trust and empathy, change or resistance to change. All these issues were then analysed within the framework of the joint development of activities.

TCA – R1: [M.E.T.](#)

3.2. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

As an issue already defined in the previous Adapt and Employment Initiatives, the lack of prior knowledge of the training and employment situations and systems in the partner countries had to be overcome at the start of cooperation. This was generally done informally or during the first meeting(s) of the partnership.

In the 1st Round, the [EMPOWER](#) TP developed a formal approach which proved so useful that it was repeated by the [Job.Plan](#) Austrian DP for its second partnership. A brief template was developed for each partner to prepare a 10-page background paper, including:

- A description of the country;
- A short presentation of the demographic situation;
- An overview of the main labour market relevant data;
- Family and partnership issues;
- Equality legislation;
- Policy on Gender Equality including Gender Mainstreaming.

In order to help the partners develop a good understanding of each other, the TP also developed a template for each DP to present itself, using the following headings:

- National partners;
- Cause and purpose;
- Objectives;
- Activities;
- Steering and controlling;
- Specific framework at national level;
- Expected results and products;
- Sustainability and mainstreaming.

TCA – R1: [EMPOWER](#) – R2: [Bridging the Gender Gap](#)

The [Equal Voices](#) TP used an approach that allowed for huge amounts of information to be shared amongst partners in a relatively short period of time – the so called World Café approach where people met and spoke with nearly all other participants in just one session. The approach allowed everybody involved in the DPs to meet all the members of the TP. Each DP could decide how many participants to bring to the World Café. The process was organised as follows:

- Plenary inputs
 - The transnational workshop starts with an input from a keynote speaker, followed by statements by each of the transnational partners. Keynote speech 20 minutes – partners 5 minutes each.
- Café tables
 - Each transnational partner chairs a table where he or she is available for all questions from other people. For each table, the guiding questions were: How is your project dealing with non-discrimination and equal treatment? Which were the most important statements presented? Solutions, actions, comments
 - The idea is that people sit at a table chaired by one of the presenters and have a series of conversational rounds lasting about 25 minutes about questions which are important to them.
 - At the end of each round, the chair remains as the host and the others move to the next table. The host of the table welcomes the newcomers and shares the essence of the previous conversation, the guests relate their impressions and the conversation deepens as the round progresses.
 - This process lasts 1 h 30 min.
- Plenary summing up
 - After everybody has sat at each table, the chair persons wrap up the proceedings. A short break allows them to prepare for summing up. The result is usually a good impression about core issues, which the participants share. Of course the outcome depends on the quality of the initial inputs and on the choice of the questions prepared for discussion at the tables.

TCA – R1: [Equal Voices](#) – R2: [CHOICES](#)

3.3. DEFINING THE WORK PROGRAMME

This was the first, and probably the biggest, challenge for TP partners, described by [@CCEDE](#) as "sailing on a rough sea, in bad weather". Only one of the TPs ([EMPOWER](#)) finalised its whole transnational programme in a 3 hour initial meeting and it did not need to change it until the end of the 1st Round. This might be linked to the fact they only two partners had to agree! For the others, it took much longer - up to 9 months in the case of [Deloa](#), as the TP membership kept changing.

Brainstorming meetings were the most frequent method used to identify themes and activities and to allocate roles and tasks. However, the need to sign a TCA immediately can mean that the feasibility of the agreement is challenged soon after. Most participants in the ETG 4 Transnationality Working Group reported that they had to change not only the timetable (too tight) but also to re-focus the objectives and, in some cases, scale down the proposed activities (too ambitious or unrealistic). They would have preferred a longer induction phase.

Amongst the lessons learned between the 1st and the 2nd Round was the need to include the local DP partners in the preparation of the transnational work programme ([Il Laboratorio del](#)

[Tempo](#)) or even to have them signing the TCA ([Deloa](#)) to ensure their participation, support and commitment.

As might be expected, budgetary issues such as the eligibility of certain types of expenses depending on national rules (example: hosting foreign guests, or travel authorisations needed for civil servants), or the size of the DP and the amounts available for transnationality (differences ranged from 1 to 4) had to be raised at that stage. However solutions were found, usually with the "richest", or the most flexible, DP taking over.

4. IMPLEMENTING THE WORK PROGRAMME

Transnational work programmes can take different forms and have many elements, ranging from the exchange of ideas and experience to the importing and/or exporting of models developed in parallel by the different partners in the TP. They can also include the joint development of concepts, methodologies and tools and, of course, strategies for mainstreaming the transnational outcomes at national and European level.

Apart from the single case mentioned above, the first thing that most TP members did was to update their original plans!

In [Pro European Care Sector](#), a systematic approach was used at each transnational meeting to match achievements with expectations and reassess whether the objectives for the next period were still realistic. According to Helga Pinstrup, in charge of [SOS-mx](#) in the 1st Round and of [Faktor 2007](#) in the 2nd "There is no point in forcing objectives which cannot be reached... Better revise them when there is still time!"

TCAs – R1: [PECS](#) – R2: [MESSage. Models of Excellence in Senior Services](#)

The activities reported in the Working Groups were the results of these changes and the experience outlined here does not always reflect the sometimes painful process involved.

4.1. ALL ON BOARD

Once the division of tasks among the partners was agreed, each DP set out to fulfil its share of the common programme. The following examples show how some of the themes and issues were distributed among TP members.

In [Gender & Technology](#), transnational cooperation was divided into three strands: research was coordinated by [WomenIT](#) (FIN), careers and guidance by [JIVE](#) (UK) and work-life balance issues by [IDA](#) (DK). All partners had to carry out the agreed tasks and "deliver the goods". Each strand met three to four times individually for working meetings and also together in a joint Visibility Event.

TCAs – R1: [Gender & Technology](#)

In [TEMPORA](#), each Working Group was led by one DP in charge of coordinating the contributions of the two other partners on a specific issue and of organising a transnational event in its country:

- [Tempora \(ESP\)](#): New formulas for the organisation of work
 - Model of Best Practice: a guide to new formulas for the organisation of work and recommendations for collective bargaining
 - Training programme for social agents in reconciliation policies
- [Tempora \(F\)](#): New social services for the quality of daily life
 - Recommendations for the creation of a service model to support dependents and to improve work-life balance
 - Training programme for the organisation of support services for reconciliation programmes
- [Con Tempo \(IT\)](#): Perspective on social times
 - Awareness-raising model on work-life balance in an academic context
 - Model of "good practice" on the scheduling of working hours and organisation of time
- [Tempora \(ESP\)](#): Model for a resource centre on work-life reconciliation,
 - Services to be provided to private and public organisations
 - Tools and products necessary for a support structure for the resource centre.

TCAs – R1: [TEMPORA](#) – R2: [Vertex for equity](#)

In its [own DP](#), the lead partner of [Breaking the Barriers](#) set up a series of internal thematic working groups, which brought together team members from the different local partner organisations. The idea was to ensure that the comprehensive, integrated approach of the project would involve and benefit all partners. The same approach was used at transnational level. This meant that members of the DP project teams, who were working together with strategic partners at national level, cooperated transnationally on the same thematic focus or on related issues:

- Careers guidance and mentoring;
- New learning, ICT training, e-learning;
- Company cultures;
- Gender mainstreaming;
- Evaluation.

The working groups enjoyed a lot of independence and freedom. Their work was facilitated by a strand co-ordinator who had to report back to the transnational Steering Group. This structure gave autonomy to the working groups, whilst ensuring that the top-level people who were ultimately responsible were kept well informed.

In the [2nd Round](#), the strict focus on products development, both at national and transnational level, is the link between the partners and the approach to implement the integrated strategy. Various product-specific working groups “represent” the DP at transnational level where responsibility for the products is divided between the partners.

TCAAs – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [pro\(e\)quality](#)

4.2. HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

All of the participating DPs emphasised the importance of field visits in getting truly acquainted with the grass-roots realities of their partners.

4.2.1. A variety of participants

Not only did the DPs involve their central project teams, but also some of their field staff and, to a lesser extent, representatives from their local stakeholders. In a few cases, the final beneficiaries were involved.

For [EMPOWER](#), study visits took place in advance of transnational seminars, as a preparation for specific issues. However, they also served as a vehicle for exporting or importing experience. For their first study visit to the UK, the Austrians took an active part in the national Carers Week, whilst on their second trip, they visited a computer course for tele-learning soft skills. Because of their respective expectations and budgetary constraints, partners chose different target groups for these visits: [F&Mpower](#) involved project staff and strategic partners, whilst [ACE national](#) also brought project beneficiaries. When hosting events, both invited all relevant stake holders (beneficiaries and strategic partners).

Following these visits, seminars were organised to increase experience in specific themes and to compare different approaches in different countries. The last session of the workshops was dedicated to the lessons learned and to what could be transferred at national level.

TCAAs – R1: [EMPOWER](#) – R2: [Bridging the Gender Gap](#)

Considering study visits as a learning event for everyone, [SOS-mx](#) hired a bus to take some 35 people to Sweden to discuss flexible working models. This involved not only project staff and DP decision-makers, but also unemployed, male, metal workers currently trained in social care of the elderly. The concept of “Giving knowledge and getting knowledge” lay at the heart of this exchange process.

TCAAs – R1: [PECS](#) – R2: [MESSAge. Models of Excellence in Senior Services](#)

In Luxemburg, [FOGaflex](#) ran three short-term training courses to equip the beneficiaries with the basic skills necessary for working in the new flexible childcare structures created by the DP. A major conference was organised by the [French partner](#) for its own national network, including a presentation of transnational cooperation within EQUAL. The Luxemburg DP was asked to demonstrate the impact of its training on the new structure,

on the quality of services and also on the target group. The DP took three beneficiaries and two trainers as witnesses to the conference. The effect was enormous: the audience of about 300 professionals was extremely impressed with the testimony of these women, who were very honest about the impact of the training on their private and professional lives. Even more important was the empowering effect on the women themselves: they felt valued and, at the same time, they were very proud of what they had done. Now, two years after the conference, "we still talk about this story when we want to describe the impact of our training and the effect of transnational exchanges on the beneficiaries" says project leader Marco Deepen.

TCA's – R1: [Accueil de l'enfance](#) – R2: [Improving Childcare](#)

Cross-border exchanges were targeted at women training for, or already working in traditional male occupations, who were being supported through [JIVE's](#) mentoring schemes.

A transnational networking event for mentors and mentees allowed these women, who were often extremely isolated within their own organisations as well as in their sectors to meet other women from different European countries who were in similar situations. The meeting proved to be very fruitful for the DP in terms of empowering the participants. The effect on the organisations was also significant in that it reinforced their efforts to combat the isolation of women in such positions. The outcomes of the discussions which took place were used to write the 'Good Practice in Mentoring: European Guidelines' booklet.

TCA's – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [pro\(e\)quality](#)

4.2.2. From strategic partners to working partners

Several DPs realised, during the course of Round 1 that the role of decision makers in transnational activities should go beyond that of opening and closing conferences or hosting a reception in the Town Hall. Even though such events can be a first step in their involvement and can be reasonably easily achieved if the local press are in attendance.

In [F&Mpower](#) (AT), the main objective of involving decision-makers more closely in the 2nd Round project is to increase the impact of the DP on structures and systems, by showing top managers and heads of public services the value of the experience acquired abroad. An effective motivational tool was to involve delegates from the public employment service, from trade unions and from the chamber of crafts in a study visit to the UK. On their return, they introduced this new information and experience into the debate at national level and used it to develop new strategies in their respective fields of work. In the 2nd Round, some of those partners changed their roles, moving from being strategic partners to working partners and some of these are now responsible for specific projects in [Job.Plan](#).

TCA's – R1: [EMPOWER](#) – R2: [Bridging the Gender Gap](#)

[French](#) visitors to Vila Nova de Gaia in [Portugal](#) were interested in finding out about the organisation of public services at night, as part of their study visit on opportunities for workers with atypical schedules. Sixteen members of the local Town Council accompanied them on their tour which lasted until 6 am... and, for the first time, they realised that their town was not a safe place for older people to be at night.

TCA – R1: [European Cities Network for Conciliation](#)

4.3. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Having, sometimes with difficulty, overcome the language barrier, the differences in training and employment systems and the need to define common concepts, DPs can start exchanging lessons and good practice.

In [Pro European Care Sector](#), the gap in understanding between partners was initially perceived as being enormous. For a start, in the case of one partner, the word "carer" in had no direct translation but five different equivalents depending on the target group that was involved. There were also differences in objectives. Denmark was concerned with bringing more men into the social care field, Italy was trying to increase the number of carers by "legalising" immigrant women from Eastern Europe; in Germany, the approach depended on the type of social or health problem; and in France the job as such did not

exist. "In some countries, you cannot be a home-carer without formal training, in others you can just come off the street, get a quick induction course and start the job" noted the Danish colleagues. With such a range of approaches, transnational work was rather difficult. However, the benefits of transnationality were apparent in the other activities, such as seeing how differently things happened in France, for example. Working together to set up a [database](#) that contained new ways of recruiting and retaining staff in care of the elderly, in particular women and immigrants, helped to overcome these difficulties. The work process required all of the partners to explore the differences between occupational profiles, training systems, the labour market situation of carers and also the decision-making structures within the care sector in the five countries involved (AT, CZ, DK, D, F, I, E). This represented a real quantum leap in terms of knowledge and understanding of how things are handled in other parts of the EU and of what can be learned from all those differences: "The reports were not the most interesting thing. Rather, it was the contact with the partners that provided the inspiration".

For instance, those in charge of further training for carers in Denmark were interested in the work on dementia in Germany and other colleagues were interested in how training for carers was carried out in the south in France and in how beneficiaries were assessed at the start of the training. The cooperatives idea from Italy was also of interest.

TCA's – R1: [PECS](#) – R2: [MESSAge. Models of Excellence in Senior Services](#)

For projects with little experience of transnationality or those which are embarking on transnational cooperation for the first time, it is very useful to be able to share the experiences of a more "seasoned" partner. This is true in terms of extracting learning from both positive and negative results.

The Austrian DP [Just GeM](#), now [POP UP GeM](#) in the 2nd Round had successfully introduced gender mainstreaming into the employment policies and practices of the region of Styria and it is currently working to make the achievements and pitfalls of this project available to its new transnational partners.

At the first TP meeting, when the participating DPs defined the tasks for the work programme, it became apparent that the Austrian project had specific experiences and achievements, methods and tools to exchange. The partners all asked the Austrian delegation to share their strategies and products and also the theoretical framework on which they had been based.

As a result, POP UP GeM prepared a seminar as part of a transnational meeting and pumped its achievements from the 1st Round into the developmental processes for gender mainstreaming, which are underway in the partner countries.

TCA's – R1: [Climbing to Equality](#) – R2: [Gender @ Work](#)

4.3.1. Import / export of experience

Many DPs went beyond mutual information activities but did not necessarily go all the way to developing joint products, putting more emphasis instead on transfer and processes. They stated that it was not books, CD ROMs or DVDs that mattered but rather the opportunity to work together and understand what could be shared in terms of skills, techniques and approaches.

For instance, through its study visits, the [FOGAflex](#) DP imported the practice of providing childcare and childminding in the home through a single structure from [Familles rurales](#) (F). This helped to develop the flexibility of the service and also to raise its quality by organising the same training for both types of staff. Accreditation of prior learning was another focus of interest to the [Belgian partner](#).

TCA's – R1: [Accueil de l'enfance](#) – R2: [Improving Childcare](#)

The experience of Italian cooperatives was one of the methods identified by the Czech DP [Partnership in Family](#), to be explored in the 2nd Round project [MOPPS](#). Under the old system in CZ, it was normal for factories to start at 6 am and all the men and women workers were used to getting up at 4.30 am every morning. Childcare centres opened at 5 am for babies and infants and the school day started at 8 am but the schools opened earlier. Children went to after-school institutions and parents often also had two jobs. Such a system was possible because the companies owned everything: the factories, the offices and the childcare facilities.

With the changes that took place in the early 1990s, it was believed to be better if women stayed at home, but this proved not to be the case. As a result, there was a need to set up childcare structures again, but this time these structures were mainly private... and therefore too expensive for most parents and hence the interest in setting up cooperatives.

From their [Scottish partner](#) the CZ DP also imported and adapted tools to assess and then to close the gender pay gap.

TCA – R1: [Born Equal](#) – R2: [Balancing Life in Europe](#)

In the [Berlin DP](#), members of the Careers Working Group took part in a gender training event organised by [its UK partner](#). The course was aimed at teachers and trainers in colleges and it acted as a real eye-opener for the German partners in terms of improving their awareness-raising efforts for trainers. These UK good practices were imported into Germany and integrated into the training concepts designed for German trainers both in vocational schools and in companies.

TCA – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [pro\(e\)quality](#)

In the area of social work, actors on the ground often feel that companies are "more important" than they are and they may also feel intimidated or ill-equipped to approach them as equal partners. However, involving firms in project activities is a must when dealing with work-life balance issues.

When [F&Mpower](#) realised how difficult it was to contact firms and to get them involved in the DP's reconciliation activities, they also recognised that their British partner had a lot of contacts with companies and that these companies were very interested in providing offers for carers. One of the most interesting activities was the "self-test for companies on the reconciliation of professional and private life". The DP analysed this experience and discovered that:

- *It was much easier to build up cooperation with companies in a region that has full employment (London)*
- *Their British counterparts had a completely different self-perception: they contacted the companies as partners, not as "sellers of ideas that no one wants", and with a different approach – information mixed with humour!*

This became the topic of an ad hoc working group, in which [ACE national](#) shared their experience and taught the project staff and the DP's Steering Group how to contact companies. These new approaches were put to good use in the 2nd Round when the focus of the new project was placed on working with firms.

One of the by-products of this experience was that, even in the 1st Round, another Austrian DP mainstreamed this self-test for companies and used it to bring more women into technical jobs.

TCA – R1: [EMPOWER](#) – R2: [Bridging the Gender Gap](#)

4.4. CROSS-BORDER PILOTING

Cross-border piloting is a very specific kind of activity that demonstrates the added value of transnational cooperation. Trainers and/or experts from one DP deliver awareness-raising activities and/or training for their counterparts in another Member State. In some cases even short seminars or workshops have triggered lasting impact.

As part of its efforts to bring about structural change in careers counselling and guidance, a [German DP](#) invited its [UK counterpart](#) to run a 3-day transnational workshop on gender sensitive careers counselling. In addition to the German DP members, strategic partners from companies, schools and careers guidance services – all involved in providing vocational counselling and training – were introduced to their methods and approaches. These were centred on encouraging and training young women in male dominated occupations and promoting non-traditional careers for women. In the evaluation of the workshop a great deal of positive feedback was received from the participants and also surprisingly many said that the fact that "the trainers came from abroad" was one of the main factors that had motivated them to take part.

TCA – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [pro\(e\)quality](#)

In the 2nd Round, the [JIVE DP](#) is running a transnational pilot in Latvia, based on one of its outputs from the 1st Round, a Culture Analysis Tool (CAT), used to identify the culture within engineering, construction and technology companies. JIVE is training and supporting Latvian project staff to deliver the CAT, analyse the results and learn to use the appropriate technologies.

TCA – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [Gender @ Work](#)

4.5. JOINT DEVELOPMENTS

Joining forces to develop common products was another effective form of cooperation that has left lasting traces that can be replicated. These products included new concepts of training and labour market integration, methodologies, teaching, training and various forms of learning materials – from printed materials through CD-ROMs and DVDs to Internet platforms.

The [German](#), [Spanish](#) and [Dutch](#) partners of [FLEX@ction](#) cooperated on the following four common objectives, which led to the production of a Good Practice Guide about flexible forms of work organisation and greater flexibility in labour relations:

- Diversification of employment services from a reconciliation and work-life balance perspective;
- Creation of new companies for family support services and the adaptation of opening hours of public services;
- Awareness raising campaigns on role models and role sharing in the family;
- Action plans in companies to promote new forms of work organisation to support reconciliation.

Besides providing a description of the national context of each DP, the Guide offers a series of 18 case studies, each one with a description of the hows and whys of the activity and some indications about the costs and benefits of the approach that had been tested.

TCA – R1: [FLEX@ction](#) – R2: [Jumping Barriers](#)

“Benchmarking the glass ceiling, a framework to compare and rank European companies and countries”, was one of the products of the EQUAL TP [Ariadne](#), which linked the Greek [Andromeda](#) and the Dutch [Mixed](#) DPs and this innovative tool was trialled in both countries. The objective of the TP was to support and convince organisations and companies to open their doors to women and, in general, to encourage them to reflect an interest in mainstreaming gender equality in their human resources policies. The transnational dimension in the development of the benchmarking tool added value to both the cross-border and the national projects, in several ways – qualitative, methodological, practical and political – as well as making it more easily transferable to other countries.

TCA – R1: [ARIADNE - Leading women upwards](#)

4.6. EVALUATION

The evaluation of transnational activities was perhaps a less satisfactory aspect of the implementation of the TPs’ work programmes. Several methodologies were tested but from the experiences described, not all proved to measure up to the initial expectations.

The final evaluation of the TP [From Early Childhood Education to Harmonious W-L-B](#) addressed the eight key questions identified by the Steering Group:

- Did we learn from the differences between cultures and contexts?
- Did we enable effective learning processes within, and between, Steering Group meetings?
- Did we revisit and renew our sense of purpose for working in this area?
- Was the process for partner selection effective? How effective were the working methods of the transnational co-operation?
- How did the transnational partnership help the DPs’ progress / add value to the partners’ local activities?
- What impact did the transnational project have?
- Did we achieve gender mainstreaming?

In two TPs – [TEAM](#), and [EMPOWER](#) – the evaluation of transnational activities was carried out and paid for by one of the member DPs. This was also the case in [ATTIVA I TUOI TEMPI](#) and [European Cities Network for Conciliation](#), where some of the initial evaluation methods had to be changed, at the request of the partners, so that it was more criteria-based and user-friendly.

In [UC – Universes of Conciliation](#), the partners agreed on a joint evaluation of their transnational activities but faced serious difficulties when the evaluators from each country tried to exchange their methodologies. As private consultants, they tended to be quite possessive about their own methods and were not entirely prepared to share them.

In [FLEX@ction](#), evaluation was one of the TP's activities and costs were shared by the DPs. An experience with an external organisation was not rated as being positive by the partners because the consultant tried to force them to change their methods of communication.

The 2-page evaluation questionnaire developed by the British partner in [EMPOWER](#) proved very useful in evaluating the effectiveness and added value of each transnational meeting.

5. TRANSNATIONAL WORK TO SUPPORT MAINSTREAMING

Although it is too early to make a full assessment of the role and impact of transnational activities on the mainstreaming of DPs' results, there are already some signs of the "snowball" effect of transnationality. For many DPs, the activities and achievements of their transnational work were a corner stone of their dissemination and mainstreaming strategies "at home".

5.1. BOOSTING NATIONAL DISSEMINATION

Even before the DPs' final conferences, transnational events were used to disseminate information about transnational activities whilst at the same time "marketing" national products. Often, the host country would hold an event, in connection with a Steering Group meeting, to which key local players were invited. Some of these people were involved in the DP but others like politicians, counsellors, teachers or trainers, were not so closely connected and clearly, these events raised the regional or national profile of the DP.

"Foreign keynote speakers would always attract more people", says Aase Rieck-Sørensen from the [Youth, Gender and Career](#) DP. "Leaders or experts from the transnational partner projects presented the outcomes and results of their DPs which were particularly relevant to our national aims and context. You spotlight your national DP by including a transnational dimension in the event, as this made it much more interesting for our key actors and policy makers."

TCA – R1: [Equal Voices](#) – R2: [Choices](#)

Similar observations were made by the Madrid-based [Mass-Mediación](#) DP. At the final event of the TP, all the partners participated in a round-table on "Transferring Good Practice from the Transnational Gem Net Partnership", in which they presented and discussed the main achievements of their cooperation. The audience was large and strategically invited but not all of the intended target groups travelled to the capital city. Drawing on the lessons from this event for the 2nd Round, TP members have decided not to wait to hold a final conference at national level, but rather to organise various decentralised events during the lifetime of the project. These events will focus on different thematic issues and ensure the active participation of local policy makers. The DP is convinced that this formula should enable it to phase-in the dissemination of its results and also to integrate the key players into the project's development process, so that they might benefit from its transnational dimension.

TCA – R1: [Gem-Net](#) – R2: [Integrating Gender Equality](#)

5.2. CREATING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Organising meetings during which key players such as political decision-makers, representatives of public authorities and social partners or employers meet their counterparts from other Member States has increased motivation to support EQUAL activities at national level. This has also been due to the fact that most of these key players have been interested in comparing and benchmarking gender equality performance.

In both of the [Round 1](#) and [Round 2](#) projects run by KETHI, organising transnational encounters of peers has promoted change at national, regional or local level in Greece. This strategy has:

- Improved credibility and added importance and value to the project;
- Triggered competition amongst the peers, which created pressure to work towards a goal that might already have been achieved by one of the partners;
- Motivated key actors from companies, as they get the sense of being part of a transnational, and therefore more prestigious, network.

TCA – R1: [ARIADNE - Leading women upwards](#)

5.3. TRANSFERS AND MAINSTREAMING

Several DPs were able to report changes that have been introduced as a direct consequence of their transnational contacts and activities.

Exchanges and the transfer of experience between [Rennes](#) and [Prato](#) were used to reinforce the position of the DPs within their respective contexts. Business-to-business meetings with the Time Manager of the Italian Macrolotto Company convinced the Rennes business community of the advantages of setting up reconciliation services in business or enterprise parks and urban economic development areas, such as:

- Car pooling services;
- Centralised mail services;
- Childcare facilities;
- Centralised laundry services;
- Shared food shopping services.

The main arguments in favour of replicating these achievements of the Italian DP were that it had been done before, it worked, it did not cost the companies too much and their workers were very pleased and satisfied with these new services. The approach was also taken on board by the group of municipalities that surround Rennes, and this created a coordinated effort and effect that benefited citizens of the neighbouring suburbs. In addition, the creation of a new crèche in Rennes can be directly linked to the participation of the Macrolotto's Time Manager in a TP event that was held in the city.

TCA – R1: [ATTIVA I TUOI TEMPI](#)

In [F&Mpower](#), the British tool that enabled companies to self-test their reconciliation-friendliness was adapted to suit its national context and is now used by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

TCA – R1: [EMPOWER](#) – R2: [Bridging the Gender Gap](#)

The new, more flexible forms of childcare developed by [@CCEDE](#) were piloted in one municipality and have now spread throughout the 25 communes of Madrid.

Before the TP began its work, trade union members in the DP were strongly opposed to any notion of "flexibility" in work organisation, as they felt that such a concept opened the door to the creation of more "precarious" jobs. They even objected to the name Flex@action that had been proposed as the partnership's title. However, after a visit members of the partner DP in the Netherlands, that included opportunities to tour a Dutch firms, they brought a number of new ideas back to the local works councils and they are now in the process of implanting job rotation practices into companies in Madrid.

TCA – R1: [FLEX@ction](#) – R2: [Jumping Barriers](#)

In Luxembourg, six months after the end of [FOGAflex](#) DP, formal legislation (règlement grand-ducal) was passed by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs that recognised and promoted new forms of flexible, high-quality childcare provision. The participation of Ministry representatives not only in the DP's Steering Group but also in its transnational activities has been perceived as being the key factor in this mainstreaming success.

TCA – R1: [Accueil de l'enfance](#) – R2: [Improving Childcare](#)

The [Spanish partner in E.T.N.A.](#) took advantage of the transnational programme to bring a delegation of Mayors from Asturias to meet the [WAP Scotland DP](#). The purpose of this visit was to study the achievements of the Scottish DP in promoting the extension of broadband and the concept of “communities of practice.” These have made learning more accessible to people who are at a great disadvantage in accessing employment because they live in rural locations and might also have care responsibilities. The availability of broadband has also enabled companies to take advantage of e-business opportunities and local government now has the facility contact and communicate with its more rural communities.

Feedback from [SILOC@L](#) showed that this visit “opened the eyes of these local leaders to the opportunities that IT and broadband might offer to their own areas”. Since the visit, an action plan has been developed which aims to make broadband available throughout the region of Asturias by 2008. The plan focuses on the use of this technology for e-business and e-administration, as well as ensuring that e-learning is available to inhabitants of rural communities who have difficulty in accessing continuing education. One essential advantage that the Mayors anticipate is the strengthening of communication links between central government, regional councils, municipalities and local people.

During Action 3, WAP’s activities were mainstreamed through the Scottish Executive, which is the devolved government for Scotland, and this provided good practice guidelines to those who were developing and implementing broadband policy in the rest of the country.

TCAs – R1: [E.T.N.A.](#) – R2: [GENDER@WORK](#)

5.3.1. A snow-ball effect

Because of the achievements and expertise that it gained from its 1st Round DP, JIVE won a government contract to host and run a [National Resource Centre for Women’s Training in Science, Engineering and Technology \(SET\)](#). The centre was launched in 2005 and is an important component of the [UK Government’s strategy to increase the number of women in science and engineering](#). The concept links gender equality policies with forward-looking strategies to enable the country to face the challenge of demographic change and tackle emerging skills’ gaps.

This inspired its Finnish partner to transplant the idea in its own country. WomenIT organised a visit to the UK for policy-makers, other key people and one journalist. JIVE gave a presentation about the activities of its centre and also took the Finnish delegation to the funding department of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, to prove just how important the Government considered the resource centre to be.

Now, Finland is creating similar centres at regional level. One of the first will be set up in Kajaani, the home town of WomenIT’s lead partner. The Finnish DP partners have succeeded in convincing policy-makers that these centres will break down barriers not only by encouraging women to venture into technical occupations but also into non-traditional fields of entrepreneurship, and that such career transitions can only promote economic development.

TCAs – R1: [Breaking the Barriers](#) – R2: [pro\(e\)quality](#)

5.3.2. Going beyond EQUAL DPs

Thanks to the active support of the Spanish Managing Authority and its National Support Structure, certain transnational activities launched in the 1st Round have been extended beyond cooperation between EQUAL DPs. After its presentation at the EQUAL visibility event “Gender equality, a Key to Change” which took place in June 2005, in Madrid, the [POP UP GeM DP](#) was approached by projects and key players from other countries and the NSS has facilitated further contact and cooperation between them. An on-going process of transnational discussions and agreements has been launched to overcome the structural discrimination which causes disadvantages, mainly for women, but sometimes also for men.

The Austrian DP is now working closely with Spanish DPs as well as with Spanish regional authorities to develop a common model, methodologies and tools for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in employment and training policies and programmes.