

EQUAL Guide on Transnational Co-operation 2004 -2008

Employment & European Social Fund



Employment & social affairs



European Commission



FOREWORD

Congratulations on your selection as an EQUAL Development Partnership. You will now be able to explore all possibilities and to respond to challenges of working together across borders.

The Guide on Transnational Co-operation is one of several guides to support an effective implementation of the EQUAL Programme.

We have structured this guide in a sequential order in which we believe you will encounter the issues to be tackled so that the crucial points are taken into account at the "right" time.

This means that the Guide is not meant to be read from A-Z straight, but rather a chapter or a section at a time when you are planning for that part of your work. It is also an interactive document with several hyperlinks and references to other sources.

We hope that this guide can be one that you return to for timely advice during the whole implementation of your transnational co-operation in EQUAL and beyond.

The idea of this Guide was first realised at the beginning of the EQUAL Programme in 2001 and has since then been the responsibility of a Working Group on Transnational Co-operation consisting of several Member States. The original Guide has been revised in the light of experience from Round 1, taking into account the revised Communication for the EQUAL Initiative for Round 2.

Important lessons of a general nature have been drawn regarding the transnational dimension in development programmes like EQUAL. Many recommendations given in the Guide have wide application in transnational work. All present or future programmes with a transnational component could also benefit from many of the tips and guidance given in this document.

Most importantly we hope that you as a Development Partnership in EQUAL benefit from the Guide.

Good luck with Transnational Co-operation in your Development Partnership!

Note: All examples in this Guide are examples of Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCA), not individual Development Partnerships. For further information on each TCA you may search the ECDB in "TCA search" using the number indicated in each example followed by a "%" sign in the "free text search" field.



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The EQUAL guide on transnational co-operation is designed to assist Development Partnerships to develop successful transnational cooperation activities. The guide is composed of a series of briefing notes of which this is the first in the series.

Understanding EQUAL

1. EQUAL

‘EQUAL is about learning’

1.1 Key facts

EQUAL:

- operates within the broad framework of [the European Employment Strategy \(EES\)](#) (see annex 1.1);
- runs from 2001-2008;
- promotes new ways of combating all types of labour market discrimination and inequalities through:
 - encouraging innovation / demonstration / validation of new approaches and policy delivery mechanisms;
 - supporting collaboration of key actors and stakeholders around a common strategy and action plan that empowers them;
 - facilitating sharing of good practice and transferring lessons learnt to decision makers and practitioners;
 - supporting transnational collaboration and exchange of experience thereby strengthening the European dimension of employment and inclusion.

EQUAL is different from other current programmes and initiatives because it integrates national-level innovation through its Development Partnerships (DPs), with **transnational collaboration and exchange of good practice**. This means that partnerships should also undertake further innovation, joint development work and targeted dissemination jointly with other partners in Europe.

1.2 Nine EQUAL Themes

[EQUAL's Themes](#) (see annex 1.2) are directly related to the 10 guidelines of the European Employment Strategy (EES), with the addition of a capacity to fund partnerships working with asylum seekers. Not all Member States give priority to all of the Themes.

The content of a specific EQUAL Theme in a Member State sometimes contributes to more than one guideline of the EES.

The [EES](#) (see annex 1.1) was launched at the Luxembourg summit in 1997 to provide a practical framework for a European labour market strategy. Broad priorities are confirmed in the form of [European Employment Guidelines](#) (see annex 1.3). The guidelines are then translated into National Action Plans for Employment (NAPs). These set out each country's commitment for action for the year in question.

1.3 Member State Themes

The grid on the next page provides an overview of the Themes under which Development Partnerships will be funded in EQUAL Round 2 and the approximate division of the total national budget given to each. Be aware that this is only to indicate where you can possibly find relevant partners. Since similar content can sometimes be in different Themes in different Member States, you are advised to either look for further information in the [Country Briefs available on the EQUAL website](#) during the autumn of 2004, or contact directly the Managing Authority (MA) or National Support Structure (NSS) for the country of interest to you. The addresses can be found on the [EQUAL website](#).

1.4 Funding innovation

EQUAL exists to create and fund **innovative approaches** to local, national and European labour market policy issues. The idea is to develop and test ideas, and then to transfer innovation and useful experience into policy and practice. This includes transferring solutions, methodologies or approaches from one setting to another to improve the effectiveness of policy or practice. Innovation can:

- develop entirely new policies and methods;
- design and exploit new combinations of existing policies and methods.

Innovation can occur in a variety of ways. It may be:

- process-oriented – testing and adopting new practices, methods or tools;
- goal-oriented – formulating new objectives, developing new qualifications, or opening up new areas of employment;
- context-oriented – developing labour market systems or other structures through adapting innovation from another context.

For further insights into the innovation process, see “Definition of innovation from the 1995 Green Paper on Innovation, used in the EC Communication COM/2000/0567: *Innovation in a knowledge-driven economy*”



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
AT	42 %	8 %		13 %	14 %			12 %	6 %
BE fr	36 %		19 %		27 %		11 %		2 %
BE nl	29 %	2 %	7 %	7 %	29 %		7 %	7 %	3 %
CY	41 %						41 %		7 %
CZ	18 %	5 %	14 %	14 %	14 %	12 %	5 %	5 %	5 %
DE	39 %	5 %	7 %	6 %	10 %	12 %	5 %	5 %	6 %
DK	35 %				16 %			33 %	8 %
ES	30 %	6 %	15 %		15 %		13 %	18 %	1 %
EE	50 %						40 %		2 %
EL	23 %	9 %	15 %	13 %	10 %	12 %	3 %	7 %	3 %
FR	20 %	10 %	9 %	9 %	19 %	9 %	15 %		2 %
FI	33 %	8 %		20 %		20 %		10 %	2 %
HU	42 %				39 %			8 %	3 %
IT	27 %	3 %		25 %	27 %			10 %	3 %
IE	37 %		10 %		19 %	9 %	12 %		5 %
LT	69 %						20 %		3 %
LU	50 %						32 %		13 %
LV	53 %						34 %		5 %
MT	25 %		25 %				25 %		15 %
NL	32 %	2 %	11 %	4 %	14 %	8 %	15 %	5 %	4 %
PT	27 %	3 %	14 %	5 %	3 %	20 %	8 %	7 %	3 %
PL	34 %			27 %		21 %	9 %		2 %
SK	20 %	13 %		23 %		21 %		12 %	3 %
SL	60 %				15 %			15 %	2 %
SE	32 %		14 %		32 %			9 %	6 %
UK gb	30 %	10 %	10 %	10 %	13 %	13 %		5 %	5 %
UK ni	59 %							31 %	

I.5 Partnerships that empower stakeholders and disadvantaged people

EQUAL is about partnership. Its **Development Partnerships (DPs)** are funded to test solutions to a particular problem area. The idea of the partnership is to:

- bring organisations, agencies, businesses and education and training institutions together to **identify the causes** of discrimination and exclusion problems, **agree on** relevant options and to **jointly find innovative ways** of solving the problems;
- to jointly monitor, assess and **communicate** the successes and failures of tested solutions;
- act **inclusively**, drawing large and small organisations (including public authorities, employment services, NGOs, businesses, especially SMEs, and the social partners) into partnerships that address real needs relevant to the defined problem area of the partnership;
- empower their partners and stakeholders**, actively involving them in planning, decision-making, and learning activities;



- **empower disadvantaged people** by involving them in decisions and enabling them to develop skills that allow them to be active in shaping their own futures;
- make their own **work and management open and transparent**.

You can go deeper into these issues in the **EQUAL Partnership Guide**, available on the [EQUAL Website](#).

Example: A distributed training portal (TCA 489 COMPETENCE EUROVISION)

This four-country TCA - Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, has been working on certifying competencies of both workers and the companies they work for. It uses an innovative version of the Balanced Scorecard - designed by the DPs to meet the needs of small firms. Testing the tool has produced positive results in terms of efficiency. The partners have developed a joint portal delivering training packages and providing a means of evaluating competencies, including those acquired in informal, non-academic settings.

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1.6 Disseminating and transferring results to policy and practice (mainstreaming)

EQUAL experience and strategic results, methods and products need to be made available and useful beyond the partnerships where they are developed if they are to influence change and improve practice. All DPs are obliged to focus a great deal of effort on providing evidence of the good practice that they have developed and tested. If these prove to be relevant, useful and applicable at a larger scale, work should concentrate on **disseminating** and, wherever possible, **transferring** the results of their work into policy and practice (**mainstreaming**). This is done both by DPs themselves, and by thematic networks, organised nationally and transnationally, that link DPs and their work with key policymakers and practitioners.

Dissemination

Spreading experience and results to concerned organisations and institutions, and raising public awareness of the issues EQUAL is tackling, the methods being used and the results achieved to the specialist and the non-specialist public.

Transferring to policy and practice

Integrating the approaches and methods developed in EQUAL into every day policies or standard provision, ensuring that this impact is as widespread as possible.

DPs need to design their work with both **horizontal and vertical dissemination** and **transfer into policy and practice** in mind.

The obligation to transfer into policy does not rest solely with DPs. Member States are co-operating to assess and compare what DPs have achieved, and to improve the dissemination of their good practice throughout the EU.

Horizontal dissemination and transfer to policy and practice (mainstreaming)

Sharing experience between people and organisations working on common or similar issues, whether they are at regional, national or European levels.

Vertical dissemination and transfer to policy and practice (mainstreaming)

Networking with policy makers, programme managers and key stakeholders so as to influence institutional, political, regulatory or administrative changes in policy and regulatory framework.

1.7 Working in transnational partnerships

Transnational co-operation is integral to EQUAL. Ensuring high quality (see annex 1.4) in this work is crucial. Learning through promoting and transferring know-how and good practice between partnerships and between Member States is a key objective. Transnational co-operation provides unique added-value for Member State and European policy-making. All EQUAL DPs participate through preparation, implementation and dissemination that is further explained below.



- **Preparation**, where each DP structures its national and transnational work programmes, and sets up the partnerships to deliver them. At the conclusion of this phase (approximately 6 months), DPs must present a common strategy in the form of a **Development Partnership Agreement (DPA)**. This **must include** a description of how they want to add value by collaborating with DPs from abroad. This is a specific **Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA)** drawn up with at least one partner (and usually more) from other Member States;
- **Implementation**, where these joint national and transnational work programmes are carried out over a period of around two to three years;
- **Dissemination and transfer to policy and practice (mainstreaming)**, where thematic networking, benchmarking, peer reviews or foras will be used to facilitate dissemination of good practice making an impact on national and European policy. In order to support validation and sharing of good practice Member States are also able to fund some entirely new partnerships whose only objective is to transfer EQUAL experience into policy and practice ([EQUAL Communication](#) – “Free movement of good ideas” – COM 2003/840 para 11.4.17 - 18). All these activities run in parallel to the implementation and up to the very end of eligibility of the EQUAL programme.

In EQUAL, **transnational co-operation** happens at three levels :

- **between Development Partnerships** from two or more Member States; these DPs must be involved in similar or complementary activities, must share common or complementary approaches, and must be ready to develop joint strategies, approaches or products;
- **between national thematic networks of Development Partnerships** where DPs share at European level experience they have validated in their national thematic networks; the European Commission facilitates this work, reviewing strategic approaches and their results relevant at EU level, and disseminating into Europe-wide discussion and policy fora;
- **between the Managing Authorities and National Support Structures and key people and organisations across the EU**; within the Community Initiative Programmes (CIPs) the responsible Management Authorities have committed themselves to close collaboration and mutual learning through working groups and meetings co-ordinated by the European Commission, and through direct co-operation between Member States.

This guide aims to address the first aspect of transnational co-operation between DPs.

How transnational co-operation in EQUAL differs from approaches in other EU programmes

EQUAL	Other EU programmes
Requires a joint national and transnational approach.	Mainstream ERDF and ESF Structural Funds Programmes do not require (or, as a rule, permit) any transnational element. LEADER encourages transnational co-operation but does not require it.
Selection of transnational partners is not geographically predetermined or restricted.	The main part of INTERREG transnational co-operation is focused on cross-border actions.
Transnational partnerships are composed of independent national DPs.	LEONARDO funds transnational projects with a promoting body or contractor, responsible for managing all the activities of the participants from all involved Member States.



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Understanding EQUAL

2. Transnational Co-operation

‘Why work transnationally? You discover new ways of working, you learn to apply new logic, you glean and share ideas, you stimulate creative solutions, and you even reduce stress and strain.’

2.1 EQUAL’s transnational work

In EQUAL, transnational co-operation occurs at three levels :

- between DPs
- between national thematic networks of DPs
- between the responsible Managing Authorities/National Support Structures and key people and organisations across the EU.

This Brief concerns transnational co-operation between DPs. Transnational thematic networking (see annex 2.9) is organised and managed by the European Commission, in collaboration with the Managing Authorities in the Member States.

All EQUAL transnational partnerships...

must plan to exchange information and experience, (see annex 2.3) getting to know each other's ideas, strategies, and activities,

...and,

undertake some comparisons and parallel development / testing / validation of innovative approaches (see annex 2.4) to the chosen focus of their work

...they will also be involved in one or more of:

import, export or adoption of new approaches(see annex 2.5), adapting work tested elsewhere to one's own situation,

joint service, product or system development (see annex 2.6), where partners' joint capacities can achieve a common product beyond them individually,

Sharing experience on the ground (see annex 2.7) through exchanging partners, managers, trainees, trainers for longer or shorter time.

Transnational Co-operation is a dynamic process, so these models are neither definitive nor mutually exclusive. Specific mechanisms and instruments (see annex 2.1) have been incorporated into the design of the EQUAL Initiative to help DPs.

A transnational partnership may use several models of co-operation, adapting them as relationships develop and

mature, and as the partners' activities evolve. Individual DP members may be involved in a variety of activities with their transnational partners, involving all the partners and including the range of stakeholders from disadvantaged people to policymakers (see annex 2.2).



2.2 The benefits of transnational co-operation

Benefits to organisations

Strategic and long-term

- Participating in European networks and building contacts in other Member States open up possibilities for future co-operation and add a European dimension to a DP's workplan.
- Links with professional developments on a wider stage give the chance to contrast approaches to labour market policy and practice to those in other Member States.
- Gives a higher profile and added value for a DP and its key European partners in the eyes of fellow professionals and important decision-makers.
- Increases awareness and understanding of relevant European policy developments.

Operational and short-term

- Allows accessing new ideas and sharing and discussing your own in a wider context.
- Encourages using international experience and expertise to test and improve existing courses, materials and methods, and to develop new products.
- Gives an extended choice of new business partners, political allies, and technical collaborators.
- Facilitates acquiring new skills and competences.
- Enables experimenting in areas of common interest and enhancing mutual business opportunities.

Some benefits for individual participants

- Extends personal experience, language, communication and other skills and offers a wider European perspective.
- Extends sources of information and contacts.
- Provides awareness and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of national employment policies and learning systems.
- Gives improved self-awareness and growth in self-esteem and self-confidence.

2.3 Challenges

Some common challenges encountered by transnational partnerships

- They take time (see annex 2.11) and dedication to develop.
- Identifying the most appropriate transnational partners (see annex 2.8) is a time-consuming job, especially under the time pressure of the “transnational window” (the period following the inclusion of DP details in the EQUAL Common Database when transnational partnerships can be formed)
- Negotiating a common transnational work programme with potential.
- To work in partnership is a demanding business that requires flexibility and willingness to compromise in addition to proper methods for work, documentation and monitoring.
- The process uses up significant financial and human resources (see annex 2.10).
- It involves taking some risks if creative and innovative results are to be achieved.
- Transnational work makes new demands on your staff, and requires new skills and the ability to work with cultural, context and language differences.
- Some of your transnational partners may be less committed than yourself, and may even drop out altogether once they find out what co-operation involves.
- Successful transnational partnerships require continuous monitoring and ongoing evaluation.
- Intellectual property rights.
- Cultural, organisational and work habit differences (see annex 2.12).
- Difficulties with changing partners in the course of co-operation.
- The continuity of staff from design to dissemination. Everything should be done to ensure that staff remain or at least can be available as “reference people” for the benefit of the work.



And finally...

EQUAL transnational collaboration at large should have an impact on both policy and practice. But there are limits to what a single partnership can achieve (see annex 2.11). It is important to understand these limitations, to anticipate challenges, and to set goals that are realistic and achievable. Over-ambitious DPs that fail to achieve their objectives contribute very little. But DPs that set realistic targets and are prepared for the challenges they will meet can have a real impact.

What goes to make up a set of realistic targets? **A good formula is the one called SMART, recommended by the EQUAL Partnership Group, and already used by several transnational partnerships:**

- S** SPECIFIC
- M** MEASURABLE
- A** ACHIEVABLE
- R** REALISTIC
- T** TIMEBOUND

Setting these specific, realistic and achievable targets is a challenge that transnational partnerships have to meet whilst designing the work in their national DPs. This is why EQUAL provides funding and a minimum period of 6 months during the Preparation Phase (formerly Action 1).

BE AWARE!

Precise arrangements for the Preparation Phase vary from one Member State to another, so each DP must check its own Managing Authority's precise requirements and timetable, and those of countries of the DPs with which it wants to work. For example differences in the national timetables for implementation can make collaboration extremely difficult and this is best discovered before getting involved too far. (See the Country specific information on Member States Themes in Brief number 1 and the [link to this information provided on the EQUAL website.](#))



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Getting Ready

3. Preparing for Transnational Co-operation

‘The real transnational builders have this little extra, you know. They are not nine- to-five workers, they invest a huge amount of time and energy in it. They believe in the cause they are working for.’

3.1 Fitting plans to DP objectives

Good transnational partnerships result from good preparation. And remember that planning for transnational co-operation must be a part of your planning from the very start. Make sure your national work programme includes your transnational objectives.

Make sure your transnational work plans fit with your DP’s objectives (see annex 3.1).

The first and decisive test of the value of transnational co-operation is the benefits it can bring to your DP. This kind of grid can help identify them, by linking it to your DP’s explicit objectives and desired outcomes, taking into account the Equal Opportunities aspect.

	List the key features of your national DP’s work plan	The key features of your prospective transnational work plan	State your DP’s equal opportunities principles and goals
What services processes, systems, products are you setting out to develop/improve?	Joint processes, systems, products, research, dissemination activities	Aspects of your DP plan you will prioritise for joint work with your transnational partners Aspects of transnational partners’ work they will prioritise for joint work Any new products and activities specific to your transnational partnership	Shared or jointly produced EO products, research activities, dissemination activities. Could include EO policies
Which objectives are the focus of your DP?	The labour market issues and disadvantaged individuals you are addressing	The labour market issues and the disadvantaged groups addressed by the extended transnational partnership	Chosen EO issues and targets
What specific benefits do you expect from the work?	Impact on beneficiaries Impact on partners’ practice Impact on products	Impact on partners, project workers and participants Impact on partners’ practice Impact on products	Impact on EO policies and practices. Extended awareness of equality issues
What are the innovative features of the DP and its work?	Partnership, target groups, methodology, systems and products, policy	Mix of countries, mix of types of partners, methodology, systems, products	New approaches and techniques
What added value is expected from transnational co-operation	New methods, processes/ research, products Means of improving your own processes, research, products	Supporting research from other countries Complementary policy of practice Evidence of international transfer Peer reviews International policy ideas, practiced models or products	Examples of good practice/practice in new settings Ways of measuring impact Examples of wider awareness of equality issues

One of the techniques successfully used in EQUAL Round I to help run transnational partnerships is called **Benchlearning**. The approach ensures that learning from experience actually takes place. It is simply based on the logic that if you can learn something from others, there is not much point in trying to do it all over again for yourself.

The idea behind **Benchlearning** is to shift the burden of proof on innovation from those who advocate change to those who resist it. Normally the advocates of change have to prove why it should happen. The Benchlearning principle shows how and where a good working example can be presented, it is those who oppose change who need to show why it should not take place. More information on Benchlearning can be found from www.benchlearning.com.

3.2 Realistic planning

The following planning tips may be helpful:

- Try to involve at least one person with prior experience in designing transnational work programmes and managing transnational co-operation. If there is no one in your DP, consult someone who does have that experience from EQUAL, from other EC programmes like Leonardo da Vinci, or from non-human resource and even non-EU initiatives.
- Make sure each DP's Steering Group, key partners and key members of staff understand the commitment to transnational co-operation, and how it fits with their national work objectives, plans and budget.
- Make sure the transnational work is properly resourced, and if there are problems about allocating sufficient time and budgets, address them immediately and make any changes necessary. Draw up an explicit checklist of the resources required (see annex 3.2).
- Ensure that all DP partners play the agreed role, assume their agreed responsibility and clearly benefit from transnational co-operation. This ensures the success of the whole EQUAL transnational partnership.
- Make sure that your DP partners understand and have mandated the plan you negotiate with your transnational partners. Let the DP steering committee of the DP also approve the transnational workplan.
- Plan to communicate regularly on transnational progress. Make provision for special briefing meetings, an internal bulletin or newsletter in addition to always having the transnational work on the agenda of partnership meetings.

Example: Joint product or system development (TCA 2094 MOTIVATION)

This TCA, with three partners, is developing:

- a map of employment resources - all the national DPs have been putting together resources and tools relating to employment;
- and a transnational survey on motivation – the surveys are completed by all the beneficiaries of the national DPs, and the partners have agreed to use a common software tool.

Preparing to look for transnational partners

Finding the right partners will be a great deal easier if there is clarity about expectations, and about the fact that in the best partnerships everyone has something to contribute and everyone has something of value to receive in return.

- Draw up a checklist of questions about potential partners (see annex 3.3) to which you need to find answers.
- Prepare clear and comprehensive description of your DP's transnational co-operation objectives.

3.3 Building a partnership team

A co-ordinator experienced in transnational work has described the qualities of the 'ideal' transnational worker: "If you look at partnerships and groups that have worked well, it is really because of the people involved. They made it happen. The real transnational builders have this little extra, you know. They are not nine to five workers, they invest a huge amount of time and energy in it. They believe in the cause they are working for."

The team a DP brings to a transnational partnership is the most important thing it has to offer. People, not plans and reports, make transnational cooperation work.

Successful transnational partnerships:

- have at least one permanent contact person who can provide continuity, dedicating a sufficient part of his or her time to transnational activity. This may or may not be the transnational team leader. Since personal relations and trust are a vital ingredient in any effective transnational collaboration a change of staff may cause unnecessary delays and problems.
- have, if possible, someone with good language skills. Everyone must have a real interest and commitment to working across borders and across cultures.



- have properly explained the rationale and the content of the core elements of the obligatory Transnational Co-operation Agreement to all DP partners. They must be involved from the outset and asked about their specific interests and personal expectations and objectives.
- have some good management skills and experience in the team. If possible one member should have previous transnational experience.
- have access to experts and practitioners when needed.
- are careful to “subcontract” the coordination/management function, such as the partner search and the design of the TCA, to a single partner in the partnership but ensure that all partners are involved in the end. It is not recommended to use external help for this.

3.4 Approaching potential transnational partners

For most DPs the partner search cannot be completed until the “transnational window” (during the preparation phase, formerly Action I) opens. This will happen on 1 January 2005 when all Member States have approved their DPs and their details are entered in the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).

But don't be afraid to start earlier. There are a number of steps you can take as soon as you have approval for your DP:

- contact any prospective partners you know of, or have worked with before, and find out if they have also been approved;
- create some specific information about your DP for prospective partners - a one -page summary of your DP in potential partners' national languages is especially helpful. Ideally, use the “summary” in the ECDB and underline the commitment to transnational co-operation;
- consider creating a profile of your ideal transnational partners (see annex 3.4) - this may help them understand what you want from a partnership.

Example: Partners do not need to be in the same Theme. (TCA 993 EMPOWER)

Great Britain has not allocated specific EQUAL funds to Theme G, which is aimed at reconciling family and professional life. The Theme A UKgb project, Action for Carers and Employment (ACE National) DP has chosen an Austrian partner, Fempower, funded under Theme G, to complement its domestic work. The overall objective of the Empower TCA is combating unemployment among carers and women and men with children. Both DPs are producing training materials and toolkits to establish, for example, mentoring schemes and employer support - and the partnership will provide the opportunity to develop and test common guidelines for these services.

3.5 Working style, language and other issues

Organisational differences between transnational partners can cause problems in drafting the work plan and sharing resources and using the common results. These differences can for example result from:

- differences in size – some DPs only have two or three partners, others more than twenty;
- differences in status – some DPs involve large national or regional bodies, others are composed of small local organisations or community groups;
- differences in relationship to disadvantaged persons – some are closely involved in working with them, others are more concerned with resourcing and influencing those who do the direct work.

It is important that organisational differences are solved with communication tools and others described in this guide and not mistaken for difficult cultural differences where there are no easy solutions. Organisational differences have to be solved for a successful collaboration between partners. Precise and careful definition of the work plan can help to solve these things.

Differences in culture (see annex 3.5) and working styles can cause more misunderstandings and difficulties than language. Difficulties and misunderstandings can result from different:

- social attitudes and behaviour,
- business and work culture,
- attitudes to time and time-keeping.

Overcoming cultural differences (see annex 3.5) and working style preferences presents challenges but also offers great learning opportunities. The secret is to remain aware of differences whilst working together and learning from and about each other.

Example: Working across cultures (TCA 1567 MIKIRI)

The Mikiri transnational partnership creatively meets the challenge of working across cultural and language barriers through using “action methods” to define principles and purpose. For example, the partnership has explored the essence of words such as Innovation by comparing it to a machine made of people, each with his or her own role in the machine or looking at Diversity through making sculptures with scarves in small multi-national groups. The exercises are not dependent on language but they inspire discussion – in every language, including non-verbal methods between people who do not share the same tongue. The discourse is focused on action methods to animate learning and offer an experiential alternative to communication

Be open, voice your different expectations and be aware of your reactions to behaviour that you experience may signal that your expectations are not being met. Awareness of this and ability to deal with these differences through effective communication is one of the keys to success in your transnational collaboration.

Even a good command of English (or another common language) does not necessarily protect against misunderstandings. The same content may be understood differently in the different national contexts. It can be helpful to look at this carefully as work is established. This also means that the use of, for example, interpreters can only solve part of the language problem.

Time and money spent on team preparation, outside the context of specific assignments or problems, is likely to be rewarded by a team aware of its own culture and better able to understand and work with others. National Support Structures (NSSs) may be able to offer advice on this issue, and how help can be obtained.

Everyone in transnational teams learns simply by taking part. But what they take from their experience – especially if they are doing transnational work for the first time – will be greater if it is preceded and supported by some structured learning. A good form for this to take is a transnational or intercultural seminar (see annex 3.6). There are two kinds, which can be combined:

- seminars that prepare participants broadly for intercultural dynamics processes, as well as prompting them to reflect on their own cultural attitudes and actions;
- specific seminars focused on co-operation with a particular country or field of work.

3.6 Intellectual property

Any transnational partnership that is disseminating shared products or developing new ones, needs to understand how it will handle ownership of the intellectual property involved.

Intellectual property is the manifestation of ideas. In other words, in order for something to be recognised and protected, it must exist in a physical form. Ideas must be materialised in a book, software programme, picture, database etc. to be recognised as intellectual property. You can protect intellectual property in a number of ways, including copyright, patents, trademarks or design. It is important to distinguish between intellectual property rights and user rights of products that have been developed in common.

The most important thing for transnational partners to ensure is that they **discuss intellectual property** (see annex 3.7) **between themselves and agree on the principles they will build into their agreement.**

In most cases partners permit each other to make free use of each other's materials in exchange for full acknowledgement. But there are other issues:

- The rights of third parties who have been contracted to develop materials or software – they must be clearly agreed and understood;
- What will happen in the event of a jointly-developed product – will any rights be evenly divided, or will partners have rights to their own language or national versions?
- How is income from possible sales going to be handled? (Note that this is also covered in EU regulation covering the rules of eligibility)

To resolve these issues and others, it is important that partners talk to their own MA/NSS and find out if there are national guidelines and rules. United Kingdom-gb has a guide on Intellectual property available on its website. <http://www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/>. France also has a guide available on its website <http://www.equal-france.com/>.

Don't wait for an intellectual property dispute before you do anything. That will be too late.



The EQUAL guide on transnational co-operation is designed to assist Development Partnerships to develop successful transnational cooperation activities. The guide is composed of a series of briefing notes of which this is the fourth in the series.

Getting Ready

4. Finding Partners

‘NSS should make DPs aware that the description they provide in the national application form serves not only the purpose of being retained but also for partner search purposes in the ECDB.’

4.1 Looking for partners in other Member States

It takes time and organisation (see annex 4.1) to find transnational partners and agree a programme of work with them. This all has to be fitted in the busy preparation schedule while DPs are finalising their national workplans.

Experienced DPs,

- once they have been approved for EQUAL, see if organisations in other Member States that they already know or have heard of have also applied for EQUAL and been approved; partnerships built on past experience or reliable recommendation can be highly effective; but there has to be a strong work rationale - it isn't enough just to get on well with a transnational partner.

All DPs,

- as soon as the “transnational window” is open and all Member States have filled in the information about their approved DPs on 1/1/2005 the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB) (see annex 4.2) is available on the Commission EQUAL website, anyone can begin to search ECDB (see annex 4.3), contact likely partners and start working on their commitment to collaborate.

If the search in ECDB and all other attempts fails to provide suitable partners and a DP is left ‘orphaned’, the Member State Managing Authorities, assisted by the Commission, will provide help. There will be a “clearing house” in the spring of 2005 between Member States at which Member State Managing Authorities and their NSS will be given the opportunity to find prospective partners for DPs that yet have not found one and to make agreements with them.

4.2 The EQUAL Common Database (ECDB)

The ECDB is a database with records of all DPs selected under EQUAL, both for round 1 and round 2. It describes the profile of each DP selected, and gives the contact information and profile of each DP. When the content of the transnational work is agreed it is also visible in the ECDB.

The ECDB is publicly accessible via the Web. Therefore all the data in it, with the exception of certain confidential details, such as financial data, is also available to all EQUAL DPs. A short description of each DP is translated into

English or French, but the full details of its plans are available only in the language in which their partnership application was made to their national Managing Authority. As these applications generally only indicate the kind of work a DP want to include in their Transnational Co-operation Agreement, but do not name any prospective partners. These expectations or initial ideas on their transnational co-operation are available on the ECDB.

Example: DP with no previous experience using the ECDB (TCA 2434 DISABILITY FORUM)

In UK-gb, Portland College had no previous transnational experience. It used the ECDB to locate a number of potential partners. As a result a four-DP transnational partnership was put together – two of the UK-gb DP's transnational partners were focused on disability issues, and the third was working on tailor-made, individualised learning approaches. Because of the good fit between the partners, the transnational partnership was able to move beyond comparative work to direct collaboration on developing adaptive technology devices.

The ECDB's search engine can be interrogated using keywords and a range of other specific criteria. But its effectiveness relies on DPs entering the right keywords. ECDB can be searched in various modes (see annex 4.2) at different levels of sophistication. However, the ECDB is only a tool, and considerable care (see annex 4.3) needs to be taken to follow up and verify its results. Users must, for instance, be alert to differences between the Member States (see annex 4.4) in the ways in which issues and problems are classified amongst the nine EQUAL Themes. Training for people with disabilities, for instance, can be found in different Themes in different Member States. If you don't understand this you may fail to find a partner because you are looking in the wrong place.

4.3 Following-up

Once you have narrowed-down the search to a small number of possible partners in ECDB, you need to make direct approaches as rapidly as possible. Bearing in mind the need for speed and financial constraints (see annex 4.4), it is worth making a first contact by phone, fax, e-mail or even a video-conference. If this is positive, then you need a face-to-face meeting where there can be a full exchange of infor-



personalities. Visits are vital when you are judging whether or not there is a basis for a two-year partnership. Reciprocal visits should be made if possible, each partner seeing the others' local contexts and meeting a good selection of their DP members.

Always support a visit by taking some documentation describing your organisation, your DP and your national partners in the common language you are planning to use. These **first contacts and meetings** (see annex 4.5) are crucial. They are worth preparing well.

4.4 How Many Partners?

DPs cannot move into implementation of the transnational work plan without an approved agreement with at least one transnational partner. But it makes sense to have at least two transnational partners, then if one drops out, the agreement remains valid and there is no problem with eligibility for EQUAL.

The final size of a partnership must be dictated by its work. Most transnational partnerships have three or four members. Some partnerships are much larger, and they can, of course, offer great diversity and wide selections of skills. But large transnational partnerships can lack focus, be complex to manage and expensive to run. What matters most is the quality and durability of a partnership, whatever its size, the quality of its outputs, and the influence these have in shaping future labour market policy.

Some DPs are involved in more than one TCA. This is an exception only recommended to those who have sufficient experience and the capacity to manage a multiple transnational process. See Brief 6.1 for further guidance.

Example: A small partnership (TCA 998 SARA)

An Austrian and a Spanish DP are working together in the field of desegregating the labour market. Both DPs have similar interests and similar activities in their national work programmes, this is why it was easy to agree upon the transnational work programme. The activities developed at national and transnational level are connected to a point that the transnational partner has attended DP meetings. Given the small dimension of the transnational partnership, when visiting each other, these DPs have the opportunity to organise events whereby similar partners at national level visit their homologues at transnational level. For example, each DP works with trade unions, public administrations, and organisations representing the interest of businesswomen. Each visit has been organised around the interests of the different types of partners, providing a value-added exchange of experiences and common grounds for developing the transnational work of the programme.

Example: A small partnership (TCA 2802 UTRECHT AND SWEDEN TOGETHER)

This TCA has just two partners – one from Sweden and one from the Netherlands. The two DPs work on the integration of ethnic minorities. They put the success of their partnership down to the fact that they each have a solid organisation and a broad membership. Their composition is also very similar – each has banks, housing companies, city councils and commercial centres in as partners. There are a great many cross-contacts within the transnational partnership.

Example: A large partnership (ECCO TCA 397)

The ECCO (European Community Co-operative Observatory) has six members from France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UKgb, and an associate partner from Romania. The transnational partnership has created a new not-for-profit company (ECCO) at European level with one director from each partner country. It runs a specialist project support structure (using TimeBank) with each partner providing 15 days a year to support others in the network. It is launching a new EU qualification – ECCE (European Certificate of Community Enterprise), and it will publish six good practice models and recommendations to policymakers on support for the social economy.

4.5 Transnational Co-ordinators

The success of transnational co-operation depends ultimately on its management. Whatever the structure of the transnational partnership, it makes sense for each DP to appoint its own Transnational Co-ordinator (this is not the same as the ETCIM secretary – see Brief 6). These coordinators can then, on the basis of the mandate given to them by their DP:

- identify and make proposals for selection of potential transnational partners;
- negotiate the Transnational Co-operation Agreement;
- develop and manage the transnational work plan;
- monitor and organise the evaluation of transnational activities;
- organise and manage meetings and the events their respective DPs agree to host;
- ensure that DP members are fully informed on all transnational matters.



The positioning of the transnational co-ordinator in the partnership to be successful

- place the transnational co-ordinator so that this person is well connected to all partners;
- use if possible someone with a combination of skills and a stable employment position in order to ensure as much stability and continuity as possible.

Knowledge, skills, experience to look for in a transnational co-ordinator

- some prior experience of transnational cooperation;
- knowledge of the EQUAL Theme in which the DP and its transnational partners are working;
- good knowledge of the national work plans and agenda for each participating partner;
- good communication skills and competence in the partnership's agreed working language;
- sensitivity to cultural differences, especially those between the countries in the partnership;
- negotiation skills;
- organisational and management skills;
- commitment to transnational work.

Transnational co-ordinators are most successful where they carry experience of the values and work of their DPs into the transnational partnership. They can only do this when they are fully involved in their DP's work.

4.6 Preparing for partnership

Once the co-ordinator has been appointed DPs must clearly define how roles and responsibilities in their transnational co-operation are to be divided. This is particularly important for transnational activities because all DPs normally have quite different, and often complex, decision-making structures. Unless it is clearly set out, the decision-making structure of a transnational partnership may not be fully understood even by all of those who are closely involved in its work. This should also be described clearly in the transnational work plans.

The Preparation Phase (formerly Action I) of EQUAL gives transnational partnerships time to plan and agree their work. The planning itself takes time. And because Member States have different procedures for selecting their DPs, there can be slippage in the synchronised preparation timetable they agree with each other.

Transnational Co-operation Agreement - points to check

- The deadlines for submitting your DPAs and TCAs in all the partners involved, and share this information at the outset.
- Whether translations are necessary.
- Whether a signed paper version is required.

4.7 Exploratory meetings

Exploratory meetings (see annex 4.5) are important. You will only make informed judgments (see annex 4.6) about potential partners by meeting them, preferably in fairly informal circumstances. This gives both sides the opportunity to pull out early if they feel a partnership will not work. There are five key things you need to find out.

1. Do their objectives and strategies reflect your own or add something interesting to them?
2. Are their values and attitudes to discrimination and exclusion in harmony with yours?
3. Is it clear that they really want an active and co-operative transnational partnership with your DP?
4. Previous experience is not a requirement, but if they have been involved in transnational work before, was it a success? If there were any problems, have they been resolved?
5. Have you set a working language for communication and further co-operation?

Only if you are happy with the answers to these questions is it worth going to the trouble and expense of setting up a first formal meeting between potential partners.

Structuring a first formal meeting

A first meeting (see annex 4.7) is generally as productive as the preparation that goes into it.

- An agreed agenda should be circulated two weeks before if possible.
- All participants must take the trouble to read and understand short descriptions of the other DP or DPs they are meeting.



	Example of a plan for an agenda for a first transnational meeting	Clues and tips
Introductions	All participants present themselves (job, function within their DP and summary of their professional background).	Limit this to 2 minutes per participant and tell them in advance they will have to do it in this time. The process should be repeated if new people come into the meeting for later sessions, and if visits are made. Never allow people to take part in a meeting without introducing them all to each other.
Presentations of the DPs	Each DP needs to present itself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives • Origin (how was it formed and why?) • Membership and structure • Working approach and workplan (including budget) • Products and deliverables (including when these are scheduled) • Transnational objectives and any ideas about kinds of transnational activity envisaged. 	These opening sessions, which will often take up more than half the time allocated for the meeting, are vital to help partners evaluate their common ability to work together (in terms of trust, confidence in reliability, degree of commitment, ability to communicate and form quality inter-personal relationships).
Visits to host DP partners or activities	Visits need to be quite brief and run to a firm agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introductions, • presentation, • questions, • discussion. 	This is important if there are relevant partners and activities to show.
Discussion on the foundations for a transnational agreement	This section needs to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proposals for the work programme, • suggested roles and responsibilities, • an understanding of the financial and human resources the partners plan to commit to the transnational partnership. 	You may need to run this as a single session with the final session. If so, leave enough time for both (at least three hours). Ideally, there should be a break between the two (overnight or a meal) so that everyone can collect their thoughts and ideas.
Agreement on what happens next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will decisions be made about the transnational co-operation (each partner should explain the process they will have to go through)? • What will be done about recruiting other transnational partners? How will the current partners agree on whether or not to invite others? • Who will draft the TCA, and how will its final wording and budget be approved? • What management and communications will be needed once the TCA is approved and the work begins? • What languages will be used, and who will take responsibility for any interpretation and translation costs? • When will the next meeting take place? 	This part of the meeting is likely to need at least two hours. Make sure that the last two hours is ring-fenced for this purpose. Otherwise you will almost certainly leave without the decisions and the understandings you need.



Who should be at a first meeting?

The best results will be achieved if each delegation includes:

- people familiar with the technical, financial, commercial, and legal components of their DPs;
- representatives of DP partners who are authorised to make commitments;
- DP managers and co-ordinators (if they have been appointed).

4.8 Associate Partners, an exception to the rule.

Every Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) must include at least two EQUAL-funded DPs from different Member States. In addition to that, it is possible to include associate partners.

An associate partner will either be:

- an organisation from within the 25 Member States, but are funded from sources outside EQUAL (for example, Latvia has no projects concerned with business creation, but a Latvian business creation organisation could participate as an associate partner in a TCA involving at least two other EQUAL DPs);
- an organisation from a country outside the 25 Member States; this could either mean from the Accession Countries (see annex 4.8), or from one of the countries supported under the TACIS (see annex 4.9), MEDA (see annex 4.10) or CARDS (see annex 4.11) Programmes ; some of these have earmarked resources (see annex 4.12) for transnational co-operation with EQUAL, either through their own funds or from within their annual programmes of EU funds.

Please note that ESF funding cannot be spent outside the European Union, with the exception of costs for communication, travel and subsistence to a partner or activity included in an approved TCA work programme.

Example: An associate partner in Round I (TCA 41 FACETS)

The Partnership has partners from Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, UK-gb, two from Portugal. Early in 2004 the partnership recruited Autonomia (funded under Phare) from Hungary. FACETS aim was to have partner representatives in both North and South Europe, in order to exchange information from the different socio-political, cultural and historical perspectives. Autonomia's experience of working with the Roma Community has brought in information and expertise from Eastern Europe, allowing the partnership to develop a truly holistic European approach to addressing exclusion.

If you discover that transnational co-operation with an Associate Partner could add something important to your work, you must:

- check with your Managing Authority or National Support Structure for any specific national rules or restrictions;
- ensure that you have clearly identified the potential value-added benefits of this wider co-operation;
- enter the information on your associate partner in the section of the TCA called 'Added value and financial viability of associate partner'; your Managing Authority will need to be able to identify the partner so ensure that you can include the organisation's correct name and contact details, its legal status, full address and mission;
- ensure that your prospective Associate Partner can meet all the costs incurred in the transnational co-operation.

Note: Information on associate partners has to be provided in a specific section of the TCA called **'Added value and financial viability of associate partner'**.

It is important to include details of associate partners' names and types of organisations, legal status, full address and objectives, and also to enter them in ETCIM. If these details are not obtained at this stage they can prove very difficult to obtain later on. The associate partners need to be visible in the TCA, and must be consulted on its contents.



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Preparing and negotiating

5. First Steps Towards a Transnational Agreement

'Transnational co-operation is all about relationships'

5.1 A coherent transnational work programme

Your transnational partnership must be based on four shared foundations:

- an understanding that all the partners will participate actively (see annex 5.1) in the planning and delivery of the work;
- an agreement that transnational co-operation is, above all, a learning experience;
- an agreement about how you will do business as a partnership
- a clear mutual understanding of how your transnational co-operation forms an integral part of the objectives and methods of your Development Partnership and how transnational results help achieve your own objectives.

These foundations can be underpinned by an effective planning tool. This adaptation of the Logical Framework Approach is a useful example. The adapted format for EQUAL is illustrated below. It is described in detail in a separate toolkit on Partnership, available on the [EQUAL website](#).

This system is based on an approach where activities are shaped by filling in the grid from top to bottom, moving from top-left to bottom-right. In order to check the appropriateness and viability of the activities you have set out, you verify the connections between steps, moving in the opposite direction.

	Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions, Risks
Overall Objectives	The contribution of the TN work to EQUAL objectives	How to measure the objective, including Quantity, Quality, Time	How to collect the information, by when and by whom	
Transnational partnership purpose	Direct benefits for the partners	How to measure the objective, including Quantity, Quality, Time	How to collect the information, by when and by whom	If purpose is achieved, what assumptions must hold true to reach Objectives?
Results	Tangible products delivered by the DP	How to measure the objective, including Quantity, Quality, Time	How to collect the information, by when and by whom	If results are achieved, what assumptions must hold true to deliver results?
Activities	Tasks to be undertaken to produce the results	Means	Cost	If activities are completed, what assumptions must hold true to deliver results?
			Pre-conditions	Conditions that must be met before starting



Transnational co-operation means that all DPs test their work and ideas in an international setting, and commit to sharing what they learn from their successes and failures. It only works if it is planned so that it is so closely related to a DP's core objectives and methods as to be seen as an integral part of their delivery. It follows that the same people who lead the core national work should take the lead in a DP's transnational activity if they have that profile of competence. An appointed person in charge of the transnational work (see annex 5.2) is vital since it takes a lot of time and effort to coordinate. They are likely to need support.

Transnational Co-operation Agreements

The Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) that all DPs have to sign at the end of the Preparation Phase (formerly Action 1) serves four purposes:

- it commits them to collaborating in areas of common interest, sharing resources and know-how, and disseminating and exploiting results of common interest with their transnational partners;
- it defines their joint strategy and the activities they will engage in together, estimates their cost and allocates it between them;
- it forms a basis for resolving potential problems and conflicts between partners including the issue of intellectual property rights, if applicable;
- it provides a contractual basis on which Managing Authorities can approve these activities during implementation of the workplan.

Example: A transnational partnership built on close collaboration (TCA 2563 PROMOTERR)

This TCA, identifying new ways of promoting small agribusinesses, has designed a portal and website providing online services that foster exchange between Spanish and Italian producers. It cites the reasons for the success of its transnational partnership as:

- the close relationship between the partners' national and transnational activities;
- the similar socio-economic sectors in which they work;
- the fact that local key actors, including non-EQUAL partners, play an active role;
- an ad hoc evaluation team ensures that activities and end-users' expectations are closely monitored.

A coherent transnational work programme must provide:

- a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each participating DP, and an agreement on how decisions will be made and how the work will be organised and managed;
- a basis for a relationship between the DPs that allows changes and adaptations to be discussed and negotiated easily and effectively.

Objectives

Once you've met your prospective partners, you should have agreed your common objectives. You then need to see if they are feasible. You then need a plan for carrying them through. Your embryo transnational partnership may need several meetings. At the same time you should be discussing the work within your respective DPs. You may have to renegotiate and adapt some of the elements of your Development Partnership Agreement to accommodate the consensus you reach with your transnational partners.

You and your transnational partners must be in complete agreement about the key issues involved in integrating your respective work plans into a coherent TCA:

- your planned outputs, including any products you intend developing together;
- the strategy for achieving your objectives;
- and all the main events and activities you plan - their type, scale and scope.

Activities and timetable

You can then think about a detailed common work programme (see annex 5.3). But first take stock. Ask yourself if you are sure about proceeding on the basis you've agreed.

- Have the discussions gone in directions you never expected?
- Are you agreeing to things because you don't want to be seen as the only one to object?

If so, say something. **Signal any doubts early.** If necessary, raise the possibility of working with different transnational partners. Be clear with everyone about your aims for the partnership.

Never engage in any activity you don't believe in. Only if you are completely happy, go ahead and prepare a transnational work programme.

Remember:

- cultural differences often mean that partners plan and work differently;
- this can mean that transnational activities take longer than expected;



- assign clear responsibility for each task, activity and outcome;
- agree monitoring and evaluation indicators for each of your outcomes and products.

5.2 Organisation and Decision-Making

Effective management is key to a transnational partnership's success. The partnership needs to become a team. Its members need a sense of ownership of its work. But tackling innovation in a team where the partners are geographically distant and linguistically and culturally diverse is very demanding.

Each partner's responsibilities and priorities within his or her organisation and DP may sometimes seem to conflict with transnational activities. Misunderstandings and difficulties between partners can result. Only transparent communication and clear management arrangements provide a way through these complexities.

There is no single best organisational model (see annex 5.4) for managing transnational partnerships, but transnational partnerships tend to choose variations of the two most commonly used:

- **the consortium model**, which seems to work well where partners have similar levels of experience of transnational work and are willing and able to share responsibilities;

Example: A transnational consortium (TCA 909 INCLUSION-POWER)

The Inclusion - Power Transnational Co-operation Partnership is developing innovative models and methodologies to address the exclusion of disadvantaged individuals and communities, including new approaches to lifelong learning, mentoring, progression and labour market integration, empowerment and work with employers. The partners are from Denmark, Sweden and UK-gb. The TCA Secretariat is organised on a rotating Chair system, which is highly empowering and involves all the partners very fully. Each partner has particular roles assigned to it and appoints a member of its domestic team to be responsible for transnational communication. Decision-making is handled jointly through a Steering Group of representatives from each of the partners.

- and **the hub and spoke model**, where partners invite the organisation with the most experience of European networking to take the lead.

Example: Hub and spoke (TCA 1044 TEMPORA)

Tempora works on a hub and spoke model. It is organised in 4 groups, with all the partners being involved in each of them, and the DP that is most expert in the lead. They achieve objectives, they work on time, and they obtain results.

Working group 1: "New forms of work organisation".

Working group 2: "New local support services to improve quality of life".

Working group 3: "Articulation of social time".

Working group 4: "Design of a resource Centre for reconciliation".

In both models, arrangements are sometimes made for the TCA co-ordinators' posts to revolve. This is excellent from the point of view of sharing the learning, and extending experience of managing transnational work, but it must be anticipated and properly planned. New co-ordinators need to be inducted thoroughly.

5.3 Communications

Good communications (see annex 5.6) are critical to a successful partnership. They cost money, so the budget must reflect them.

E-mail (see annex 5.8) is the basis of most partnerships' communication and is perfect for making arrangements and passing documents. But a working partnership must be able to file its documents, and its individual members must be able to access them on demand. Many well-administered partnerships use a password-protected project management website on which all documents are stored and immediately accessible. This cuts down expensive telephone traffic and ensures a high level of transparency within a partnership.

It is important to use consistent terminology. If you're going to use jargon, make sure everyone understands it. To help you, use the glossary on the EQUAL Website. Where terms are not explained it is a good idea to complement this with your own partnership glossary of the terms you most frequently use – whenever a new technical or jargon term comes up, get each partner to provide their language version of it.



Example: An online 'virtual' platform (TCA 270 LOFT)

LOFT has set up a European network of expertise relating to the position of ethnic minority groups in the labour market. The German, Spanish and UKgb DP's in the partnership have organised their exchange of experience around transnational seminars and conferences and a multilingual 'virtual' platform that brings together research, information links, online training materials and a quarterly newsletter.

Partnerships work on common understanding and trust. Both of these need the support of a good information management system. Of course, management of information cannot guarantee either understanding or trust. In the end a partnership must allow for enough face-to-face communication in meetings (see annex 5.7).

Selecting a working language (see annex 5.5) – three options

Language options	Implications	Advantages	Disadvantages
Select a single working language	Relatively low costs. Common documents will be translated by their producers, but are likely to need re-editing by a native speaker of the common language.	Simplicity. Great for the partners who speak the common language as a mother tongue.	Can limit the input of those who do not speak the common language as a mother tongue.
Select two or more working languages and provide interpretation and translation	High costs and extra time demands.	Everyone gets to participate more fully.	Unless simultaneous interpretation is affordable, consecutive interpretation at least doubles the time of any meeting.
Select two or more working languages and insist that the main work of the partnership is done by people who have knowledge of both	Lower costs, but difficult to arrange unless partners already have people with the right language skills. Encourages the formation of small transnational partnerships.	A very professional way to work, if it is possible. Working meetings can be speeded up and quality added by the participants speaking in their respective mother tongues.	None.

5.4 Cultural Differences

Variety and culture difference (see annex 5.9) are great stimulants to successful transnational work. But culture can also be divisive unless its differences are understood and well-managed.

Example: Creating a glossary (TCA 635 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE EUROPE)

An Italian/UK-gb transnational partnership has produced a transnational glossary. It includes an overview of the transnational work and analyses the vocabulary used in the social firms and social economy sector, providing explanations and translations in the TCA's working languages.

Culture is not solely defined by language, even though it is the first and most obvious distinction between partners. Often other big differences between national cultures turn

out to be more important once a partnership gets down to work. These include:

- attitudes and behaviour,
- business and work culture,
- jurisdictions and administrative rules,
- social and economic structures and the assumptions that lie behind them,
- and (often the most important and divisive of all) concepts of time and time-keeping.

Often the most important cultural exchanges happen outside the meetings. The partners learn most about each other when they are eating and drinking together. And equally often, the biggest decisions are taken over a meal at the end of the day.



The EQUAL guide on transnational co-operation is designed to assist Development Partnerships to develop successful transnational cooperation activities. The guide is composed of a series of briefing notes of which this is the sixth in the series.

Preparing and negotiating

6. Completing your Transnational Co-operation Agreement

‘There is an expression - garbage in/garbage out - which is to say that the quality of a TCA depends heavily on the quality of the input provided by each partner.’

6.1 Getting ready to conclude a Transnational Co-operation Agreement

To move from Preparation to Implementation, DPs must submit to their Managing Authorities a Development Partnership Agreement (DPA), including the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA). This can be done as soon as these documents are finalised by the DPs involved. We focus in this section on the TCA since this is the specific agreement related to transnational co-operation.

What is the role of the TCA?

- It confirms the Development Partnerships’ commitment to work transnationally, completing it demonstrates an explicit and constructive engagement;
- Presents an overall vision for the transnational partnership and what they hope to achieve;
- Establishes a common and agreed understanding of the transnational partnership, activities and outputs right from the start;
- Complements and adds value to the Development Partnership Agreement to which it is intrinsically linked, these two documents provide a structure that can help significantly in the eventual mainstreaming of the project outcomes;
- Acts as a “milestone” into Implementation and Dissemination Phase (see annex 6.1) (formerly Action 2 and 3);
- Provides a structured basis for: planning the transnational work during Preparation Phase (formerly Action 1); managing, monitoring and evaluating the transnational work during Implementation Phase (formerly Action 2);
- Provides a common framework for transnational work across the EU.

This is the end of a process that will have involved:

- finding one or more appropriate transnational partners (see annex 6.2);
- discussing and negotiating a joint work programme with clear objectives and planned outcomes, working methods and associated activities, a budget and agreements regarding co-ordination, division of tasks and responsibilities;
- agreeing a management structure capable of delivering its programme;
- designating transnational co-ordinators to manage the business of the partnership;
- allocating the responsibility for providing and updating the material (either in English or French) for the EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Internet Module (ETCIM) (see annex 6.3), which is described more fully later in this Brief.

Finally:

- each DP needs to have checked its own Managing Authority’s deadline for submission of the TCA and in which language or languages it can be written;
- any doubts over the draft transnational work programme will have been resolved by consultation amongst the partners, each ensuring that their DPs’ vital interests are reflected;
- the finalised draft of the TCA will have been endorsed by the leadership of all DPs.

This formal endorsement by partners is a major milestone. You and your transnational partners may want to mark it with a workshop, a press conference, an official reception, a public round table with the chairpersons of the participating DPs, a public signing of the TCA by authorised representatives, or a combination of some of these. It is a good moment to make policy makers and other practitioners aware of a DP’s plans and expected results.

What the TCA contains

1.	The Name of the Transnational Co-operation Partnership
2.	The Rationale & Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common interests / methodology / the underlying problem. • Lessons learned from previous relevant actions. • The common transnational objectives of the participating DPs. • The (common / complementary) products / outputs / deliverables anticipated. • The added value of the strategy and planned results of each DP involved. • Value added and financial viability of Associate Partners (if any).
3.	Work Programme & Working Methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planned transnational activities. • Methodology for sharing information, results and working tools. • Time schedule for milestones, outcomes and events.
4.	Organisational & Decision Making Arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution and responsibilities of each DP. • Role and tasks relating to the co-ordination of the TCA. • Arrangements for decision-making. • Working language(s).
5.	Monitoring & Evaluation Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating transnational experience and results. • Mechanisms for updating work programme, working methodology and organisational arrangements.
6.	Financial Provisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakdown of budget for each activity, by type of costs (individual or common), by type of activity, by sources of funding. • Arrangements for cost sharing, financial control, and for avoiding double funding

TCAs are of most value when they are prepared in a really practical way and used to:

- focus discussions and establish clear basis for co-operation;
- agree the detail of the transnational work;
- assist day-to-day management of the transnational work;
- review progress, outputs and achievements;
- publicise and raise awareness of the transnational work;
- empower target groups and other stakeholders.

Some DPs are members of more than one TCA. There is no problem with this. In exceptional cases it is the only way for large and complex partnerships to find partners who reflect all the important aspects of their work. For instance a large employability partnership might want to be a member of one TCA that was specialised in helping ex-offenders, and another that specialised in the employment for people with mental and physical handicaps. These DPs need to go through the TCA process separately with each transnational partner.

Example: One DP= two TCAs (TCAs I27 and I01 ECINE and UPAE)

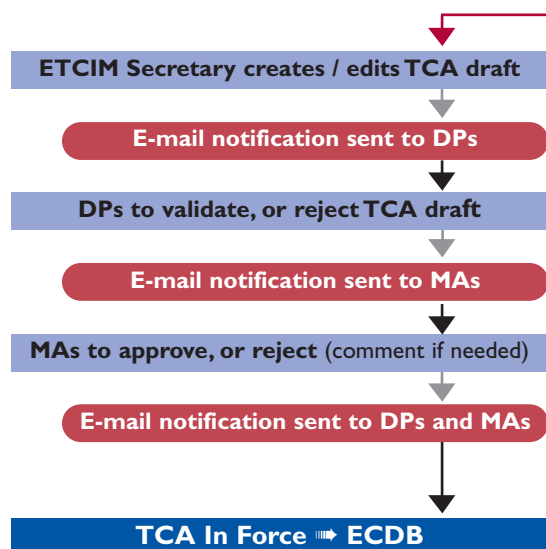
The UK-gb Working Broadband DP is a member of two transnational partnerships: ECINE and UPAE. ECINE is a small, action-oriented partnership, the other, UPAE, comprises Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and three other UKgb DPs. They have a common interest in the cultural and creative industries and e-business. Setting up both TCAs has involved a lot of effort and needed a clear direction and precisely agreed roles and responsibilities. It was particularly important to avoid “twinning” activities, and to concentrate on activities producing specific products and benefits. The DP has arranged an event for all the partners from both TCAs to meet and explore possible links.

6.2 The TCA Approval Process

In order to facilitate the consultation process between the Managing Authorities concerned, a web based tool called **ETCIM** (the EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Internet Module) has been developed. This tool ensures that all Development Partnerships and Managing Authorities involved work with the same version of the TCA thereby speeding up the approval process.



THE LIFE CYCLE OF A DRAFT TCA



- Ask other DPs to validate.
- If any DP chooses to reject, the ETCIM secretary has to re-introduce a new draft of the TCA.
- After validation by all the other DPs, the ETCIM secretary has to validate. A notification is sent to MAs requesting their approval.
- MAs have the possibility to give comments. However, **approval** or **rejection** is required in order to continue the process.
- The notification is sent whenever one MA has rejected, or all MAs have approved.
- TCA content becomes public except for financial details.
- Dates of DPs validations and MA approvals are registered as well as any comments made by MAs.

How the ETCIM works

The ETCIM Secretary, person designated by a transnational partnership, introduces and modifies (in English or French) his or her partnership's complete TCA agreement.



The participating DPs validate this input into ETCIM.



The relevant Managing Authorities comment on the proposed TCA.



They then confirm, once all the Managing Authorities involved have agreed the TCA, the individual DPs' selection for Implementation Phase (formerly Action 2).



Once this has happened, TCAs are transferred to the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB), where they become public documents.

Managing Authorities

The Managing Authorities (MAs) are responsible for appraising and approving TCAs. They issue grant letters for funding under Implementation Phase (formerly Action 2) (according to European and national legal frameworks, with the provisions of the CIP and the Programme Complement). They also follow common provisions (see annex 6.4) designed to make the process smoother and more efficient:

- synchronising their appraisal and granting calendars;
- supporting partner search activities;
- supporting DPs as they draft and submit their TCAs;
- applying common criteria for appraisal of TCAs;
- consulting one another before approving any TCA;
- applying common consultation procedures for subsequent significant revisions of TCAs;
- doing all that they can to minimise the number of DPs that drop out of the process after having been selected for Preparation Phase (formerly Action 1), and the number of "orphan" DPs left without transnational partners.

Note: DPs must not use the ETCIM to develop and negotiate a TCA, only to **approve** it. It is only accessible by Internet to **authorised users**. Managing Authorities grant this access on the basis of guidance provided by the Commission. The DP is given a unique login username and a password to consult the ETCIM, and a separate password to introduce, modify or validate data. For obvious reasons, DPs can only access data of TCAs in which they are participating.

Submitting the TCA

Once the core elements of the TCA have been agreed and the draft TCA finalised, it is submitted to the responsible Managing Authorities.

- Individually, all DPs in a partnership submit their joint TCA to their respective Managing Authorities, together with their individual Development Partnership Agreements (DPA). Some Managing Authorities may require a TCA developed in a common language to be translated into their national language.
- Collectively, the ETCIM Secretary introduces the draft TCA (see annex 6.3) (in the commonly agreed language version) into the ETCIM. Hyperlinks can be used to give access to any other language versions. The TCA is still a draft at this stage, and can only be modified by the one person designated by the transnational partnership (the ETCIM Secretary).

Using the ETCIM

1. A draft is posted on the ETCIM.
2. The system sends an e-mail to all the transnational partners asking them to validate it. **Note:** *this only works for those who include their e-mail addresses. In Round 1, some DPs forgot to do this.*
3. They confirm that the version entered into ETCIM corresponds exactly to the one they agreed between them, and validate it. If they want modifications made, they ask their designated responsible person to make the changes, and then return the new version of the TCA for validation.
4. When all partners have validated the draft TCA, ETCIM sends an e-mail to the Managing Authorities concerned notifying them that a TCA has been concluded and inviting them to consult it. Nevertheless contact your Managing Authority to make sure they have received the e-mail notifying the conclusion of the TCA.
5. The Managing Authorities then analyse the agreement. They may reject it, in which case an e-mail from ETCIM informs all the DPs concerned of the reasons. The DPs must discuss these, resolve any difficulties and submit a revised version of the TCA. (Do not create a new TCA.)
6. If this still needs improvement, the process starts all over again (use the ETCIM Guide).
7. Once the Managing Authorities all confirm that the content is of sufficient quality, that it adds value to the strategy of their national DPs, and that the financial plan complies with the rules and requirements, the TCA is approved.
8. The same procedure must be followed if the transnational partners decide to make a (significant) revision of the TCA during the project life.

Getting approval for your TCA (see annex 6.4)

A TCA is finally approved when all Managing Authorities of all transnational partners have agreed to it. This approval is immediately registered in ETCIM.

This approval of the TCA is also part of the overall confir-

mation procedure for the implementation phase (formerly Action 2) for each of the DPs.

Following full agreement the TCA data in ETCIM is transferred to the ECDB, and most of it (budgets are excluded for obvious reasons) becomes publicly accessible.



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Making it work

7. Meetings, Study Visits, Exchanges and Placements

'DP's should be encouraged to get to know their partners well, not just building close working relationships, but also friendships.'

This section of the guide is a more in depth explanation with tips for some of the ways of conducting transnational co-operation described in Brief 2 of this guide. It is important to note once again that exchanging information through meetings and study visits is not an end in itself but rather a means to share experience and expertise and a step in a process of organised learning.

7.1 Exchange of information through meetings and other communication.

Planning visits

Managing a transnational partnership largely by telephone, fax and e-mail is a challenge. The occasions when partners meet face-to-face are enormously important.

Much of the real mutual learning, the transfer of good practice, and creative joint development takes place during brief periods of face-to-face contact in meetings, study visits, exchange of personnel and placements.

The more ambitious the plan, the more you stand to get out of it.

Using meetings well

- In larger transnational partnerships some business between partners with a common interest or a task to perform can often be done best in bi- or tri-lateral meetings rather than multi-lateral meetings.
- When your partnership meets, try to use the opportunity to raise the profile and credibility of your transnational work. There may be opportunities to involve key people from your locality or some professional grouping, policymakers or Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and the press. But don't let publicity take over your business agenda.

Preparation

- Prepare meetings and visits carefully in advance. Opportunities for face-to-face encounters will be restricted, and their real costs in cash and time are high. They need to be used to best advantage.

Finance

- When you plan, be aware that the transnational budget available to each partner may differ widely. This may limit what can realistically be done, and may make it impossible to distribute contributions evenly across partners.
- Agree arrangements for meeting costs clearly and in advance. Usually, the host DP funds the cost of meetings and the visiting DPs pay for their own travel and accommodation. The rule is that the transnational costs of individuals should be borne by their own DP. Where there are common transnational costs, there needs to be an agreed cost sharing arrangement.

Logistics

- Much of the success of a meeting depends on having comfortable accommodation in a good venue, good presentation aids, focused and professional chairmanship and minute-taking.
- Take into account the very different number and dates of public holidays in the Member States. These can cause scheduling problems.
- Take proper account of travel time. Don't expect to be effective in a meeting if you've just rushed against time from the other end of Europe.

Hospitality

- If you are the host, meet your visitors when they arrive and be sure to provide all the local information they need.
- Help with hotel bookings, and check whether any visitors are staying longer for personal reasons.
- When you arrange meals make sure you know about any special dietary requirements.
- Include social activities in the schedule or programme. Informal networking is often the best way to get to know your partners.
- But be aware that customs and rules regarding the funding of hospitality vary from place to place. Try to avoid embarrassing a partner who is unable to match your hospitality. Make sure all partners check their own national rules.

A good result

- Produce a good report that highlights what has been agreed, and distribute it within one, or at the latest two weeks of the meeting. If it is later than that, most of the participants will have moved their attention to something else.

Conducting meetings

Preparation

- Have an initial exchange of partners' views on the aims, objectives and expectations of a meeting well in advance of it taking place. Then a draft agenda can be circulated, negotiated and agreed before the meeting takes place.
- All participants must be able to understand what is said, so make sure you know in advance who will be coming and what their language competence is (unless you have previously agreed to adopt a common working language).

Setting the agenda - ensuring clear separation of tasks and enough time for the key groups of business

- Business relating to the management of the transnational partnership.
- Presentations of partners' activities and discussion of issues of shared interest.
- Public relations involving politicians and other public figures.

Running a meeting

- A transnational meeting lasting a day or more is a tiring experience for everyone. It needs to be managed carefully if it is to be productive. The three most important pre-requisites for this are:
 - that everyone must always know the names and the status of everyone else taking part;
 - that everyone must always know where the meeting is in terms of its agenda;
 - that the business must start and end on time.
- No one concentrates that well for more than about 40 minutes at a time. In the unfamiliar and tiring setting of a transnational meeting it makes sense to have a five-minute break at least once each hour, as well as designated refreshment breaks.
- There should be plenty of water or other soft drinks available.
- If a common working language is being used, those who are fluent in that language must speak slowly and clearly and avoid colloquialisms and confusing acronyms.

- The chair needs to summarise regularly, making sure everyone understands when key points and decisions have been reached.
- Use flip charts and other visual aids to record arrangements, milestones and agreements.
- Ensure conclusions become agreements. Make sure all participants have their say (not only those who speak the working language fluently).
- Confirm at the end all agreements and follow-up actions. Make sure that all partners understand the next steps, and what they are expected to do.

7.2 Study Visits

Pre-planning

A study visit offers a great opportunity to bring DP members, participants in DP activities and even policymakers and funders into transnational work. It is always a great experience for anyone observing work in another Member State for the first time. Plan objectives and content, composition of the party, briefing and debriefing and practical arrangements. Some simple guidelines:

- ask potential participants to list their learning priorities (including the kinds of people and activities they want to see);
- ask the hosts to respond with a draft programme;
- plan the final programme once the visitors have responded;
- do this by phone and e-mail if possible, but arrange a face-to-face meeting between the key organisers if problems or misunderstandings arise.

Example: study visits for participants in DP actions (TCA 233 LE MAT)

The Le Mat transnational partnership involves Germany, Greece, Italy, Sweden and UKgb. They are working to help disadvantaged people develop jobs in the social economy. One of their transnational activities is to undertake research interviews during study visits in the different countries. For this interviewing, a special "interview kit" has been created by one of their transnational working groups. This comprises a questionnaire, instructions and a tape recorder. The resulting interviews will be published in a book that will also include good examples and accounts of experience of work in the social economy in the participating countries.



Suggestions for hosts

- Brief and debrief all of your people involved in the visit.
- Ask about the particular interests of individual visitors, and try to accommodate them.
- Check participants' language, dietary and other special requirements.
- Make sure that the timetable for visits is not overcrowded.
- Plan a social programme but also allow some free time for participants.

Suggestions for visitors

- Provide your host with full details of your party well in advance. This includes names, gender, organisation, job position, role in DP, area of expertise, other interests, language competences and any special dietary or other requirements.
- If the host cannot provide an interpreter, you may also have to include someone in your party to fulfil this function.
- Brief all your participants in advance, explaining the programme, ensuring they understand the host's organisation and its role in the transnational partnership, and explaining the social programme and hotel, eating, arrangements.

Further help and advice can be found in the Finnish Guide on transnational meetings available on the [ESF website in Finland](#).

7.3 Developing services, products or systems jointly or in parallel

Your transnational activity should always produce something. Products, whether formal or informal, must be documented and disseminated as part of your mainstreaming effort. You can make this more effective in a number of ways.

- If you are comparing situations and practices in different Member States, establish benchmarks so that you can see how they can improve policy and practice in other countries.
- Take advantage of expertise and methods from other Member States, and try to find ways in which it could be adapted, if necessary, and then transferred to a new setting.

Example: A jointly-developed certification model (TCA I312 DIAPASON)

A new EQUAL opportunity certification model called OPTIMA has been developed by an Italian/Spanish transnational partnership. It builds on a certification model developed by a Spanish partner under NOW that is already recognised at EU level. However, this certification is very costly for enterprises, and deters small businesses from buying into it. So a more cost effective model has been developed. The model is being tested in ten Italian SMEs operating in the food, textile, social services and construction sectors. The objective in Spain is to extend OPTIMA to small businesses and to use it to increase women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors. In Italy, the aim is to get the model adopted and used widely.

- When you develop joint systems, processes or products, take each partner's strong points and forge them into a common strategy and approach.
- Ensure that what you produce is of use, be clear for whom it is intended, and plan how you intend to get it to them.
- Make sure that everything you produce (products, instruments, methods) is made available to others.
- Seek guidance from your Managing Authority if you are producing products with a commercial value and intend to market them commercially. Pay special attention to intellectual property rights ([See 3.6 Intellectual property](#)).

7.4 Sharing experience on the ground through Placements

- Partners or project staff selected for placements need to be well-motivated, resourceful and able to act independently.
- They must be well-skilled for whatever job they will do while they are on placement, and able to operate at whatever level of foreign language skill has been agreed.
- Placements need to be of reasonable length if they are to be useful and productive. Between two and three weeks is probably the minimum useful length, and three months is likely to be the maximum for most partnerships.



Example: Empowering placements (TCA 233 EXIT)

This Swedish DP involves ex-offenders who are developing co-operative work, some as project leaders taking an active role in the TCA work. One of their specific tasks is to interview colleagues with the same background in Italian co-operatives to learn and get ideas for action, where they have a lot more experience than in the Swedish co-operatives. This activity has positively empowered them and doing it successfully has been a matter of some pride to them.

- Once this has been established, make sure everyone understands the objectives of the placement, including individual learning goals and work tasks.
- Design work objectives carefully, allowing time to settle in. Be realistic and take account of capacities of both the person on placement and of the hosts, to resolve technical and practical problems surrounding training or working in another country and language.
- Everyone must be well-briefed - participants and where appropriate their families, accompanying staff, sending and hosting organisations, host enterprises and, if relevant, host families.
- Practical matters like medical- and other insurance, third party employment insurance etc. must be dealt with in good time before the placement.
- Some prior briefing and training is essential to ensure that participants understand and can cope with differences in culture and working methods as well as language.

There must be an agreed monitoring process that keeps both the host DP and the person on placement's employer in contact and informed about the progress of the placement.

Finally ...

The Commission's Communication setting out guidelines for EQUAL in Round 2 is called 'Free Movement of Good Ideas'. It specifically underlines the obligation of all DPs and transnational partnerships to record and report on their work, including their transnational co-operation activities and the added value they provide to their work in terms of both policy and practice. Make sure your transnational activity is fully recorded in the reports you make to your MA/NSS. And we strongly encourage you to use the web to disseminate results from your transnational work.



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Making it work

8. Financial Planning

‘It is important to remember that there are two sorts of rules - EU-wide rules that are the same for every Member State – and national differences in the way financial matters are handled. It is important not to get caught up with the national differences but rather to look for common solutions.’

8.1 Financial Rules & Procedures

DP budget administrators and transnational co-ordinators who have responsibility for DPs' finances and those of their transnational partnerships need to understand:

- key EU financial rules and procedures;
- specific EQUAL financial planning and management issues.

Note: Bear in mind that there may be some variations between Member States' detailed financial rules and provisions. If in doubt check with your Managing Authority.

The main EU rules cover what expenses may be claimed and by whom, how costs can be shared and how double funding can be avoided. They reflect the critical remarks of the Court of Auditors, and recognise the substantial increase in budgets available for EQUAL transnational co-operation.

Categories of expenditure eligible for transnational co-operation

- a. Costs of participation (travel, accommodation and meals) in working meetings and events, and information visits.
- b. Costs of communication and translation to facilitate exchange of information and experience.
- c. Costs of information visits and placements of participants (trainers, trainees, staff, key actors and others).
- d. Individual cost contributions from each DP to joint activities and joint development of services or products.
- e. Costs of organising meetings, events, information visits and placements, including costs of meeting facilities, interpretation, receptions, translation into the agreed working languages.
- f. Costs of joint activities and joint development of services or products carried out by third parties. Where there is a cost-sharing agreement, eligible expenditure for this category and for category g (below) should not exceed 25% of a Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA).
- g. Costs of your DP staff time attributed to transnational co-operation (if your MA requires you to include it in the TCA), staff like a Co-ordination Secretariat, process consultants and facilitators, experts, joint surveys, and evaluation of the common work.

8.2 Financial planning and management

Vital information before you start planning each partner DP's total budget, and the amount and percentage allocated to transnational work:

- DP budgets for transnational co-operation vary a great deal because DPs themselves differ greatly in size, and because there are wide variations in the percentages of their overall budgets that DPs allocate to it;
- plans must be carefully designed to exploit what each DP can contribute, avoiding unreasonable expectations of those with small budgets and unreasonable burdens on those with larger budgets;
- if you find there is insufficient provision in your DP budget for the work you want to plan, some partners may be able to increase the percentage they've set aside for transnational work, or you may be able to look for additional financial assistance from other national or local sources.

Budget for each task

It is best to budget for each task or phase of your work programme. Each DP's contribution must be clearly defined to underline commitment and avoid misunderstandings. Budgeting by task or phase will also help you identify and agree ground rules for spending, and finalise an overall transnational budget (see annex 8.1) showing each DP's contributions and responsibilities.

Common rules and procedures for presenting and controlling the transnational activities

Costs incurred for transnational activities are shared by participating DPs and must be clearly stated in the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA).

Transnational budgets are **presented in two parts**:

- **Individual transnational costs** that result from the division of tasks (and their related costs) between the DPs. These can be related directly to activities (modules of the common work plan) performed by one of the DPs (categories 1a – 1d) and will be borne by the DP concerned.
- **Common transnational costs** that are incurred for joint activities, common services and joint products from which each DP in a transnational partnership expects EQUAL benefits (categories 1e to 1g). *Common transnational costs are only shared between participating DPs located in EU Member States.*

Handling common transnational costs

There are two approaches.

A. Reciprocal arrangements

The **principle of reciprocity** envisages transnational activity costs being borne equally by participating DPs. It assumes that all DPs benefit equally from transnational co-operation. If this is the case, and partners have roughly equal resources, costs can be distributed amongst them and a fair budget agreed that leaves partners paying equal amounts, or amounts proportional to the activity they undertake and the benefits they receive.

B. Cost sharing arrangements (to be avoided)

Where reciprocity cannot be applied or is not the desired option for a specific reason, there must be

agreed **cost-sharing arrangements**. These may involve some transfer of funds between DPs, or payments to sub-contractors. There must be agreement on the types of activity for which costs will be shared, the formula for allocating the costs between DPs, and the methods for issuing contracts and handling invoices.

Whether **reciprocal arrangements** or **cost-sharing agreements** are used, the formula for distributing costs between the partner DPs must be clearly stated in the Transnational Co-operation Agreement.

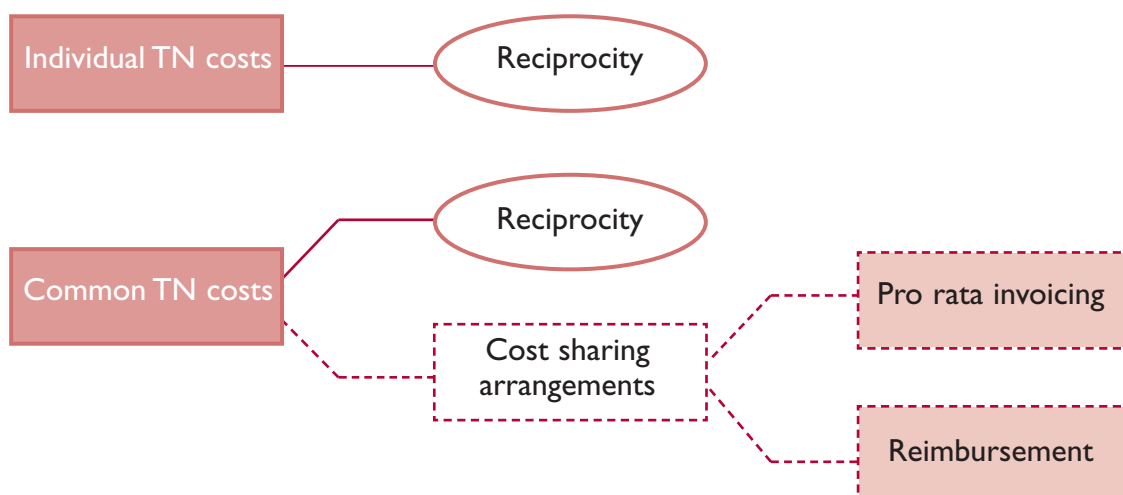
Managing reciprocal arrangements

Under **reciprocal arrangements**, packages of work are handled and paid out by individual DPs. These may be worked on by any mix of the transnational partners, or by contractors. The principle of reciprocity has to be applied to organisational costs of meetings and events (category e). **These costs always have to be covered by the host DP.**

Example: Cost-sharing (TCA 1060 THE X-TRAIN)

In a transnational partnership with five members, one partner agreed to organise the evaluation for the TCA. A university was contracted and three partners divided its direct costs between them. Another funded the partnership's common website. The fifth engaged a contractor from its own country to provide a further evaluation product.

Formula for allocating and managing the transnational budget





Managing cost-sharing agreements

DP's may opt between one of the two cost sharing arrangements described below:

- the **pro rata invoicing method** – one DP has a contract with a third party in the name of itself and the others, and specifies that pro-rata invoices are to be submitted to each participating DP, which will then pay the contractor directly;
- the **reimbursement method** - one DP acts as contractor for common services or products; it handles and pays invoices to sub-contractors, and is reimbursed on the basis of a cost recovery note by the other DPs according to whatever formula has been agreed; this can also be applied where one DP assumes the role of transnational co-ordination (Section 8.1, category g above).

All cost-sharing arrangements must comply with current Community law on the Internal Market, and must not establish new barriers to the cross-border provision of services.

Any exceptions to these general rules and procedures have to be duly justified in the TCA.

8.3 Additional notes

- Always be aware of your Managing Authority's financial rules and regulations. These vary from one Member State to another. Check them out before you plan your transnational partnership.
- Maintain a separate transnational budget and account so transnational expenses can easily be identified if needed.
- Keep individual DP and common expenditure separate.
- Keep complete records of all financial transactions and **never** make a payment without an **original** invoice. When reimbursing common transnational costs, ask your Managing Authority about the formal requirements for certified copies (of the original invoice) as a basis for payment.
- Avoid double counting. For example, you cannot claim all of your telecommunications costs as a national cost and then, also, claim international call charges as a transnational cost.
- Agree with your partners in advance the ground rules for handling common expenditures (i.e. who will pay for what). Make sure that your transnational agreement indicates the precise contribution each DP will make to transnational work.
- When you are negotiating with your partners you need to know whether their costs include the staff costs of transnational co-operation.
- Agree with your partners in advance the procedures you will follow if one or more partner wants to make a change to prior financial agreements.
- Discuss and agree in advance with your partners some contingency plans: for example, what will happen if a partner falls behind in their work or (for any reason) has to drop out. Try to anticipate difficulties and have a 'Plan B' ready to deal with such cases.
- If things do begin to go wrong, act quickly but don't panic. Consult your Managing Authority and the NSS.
- In terms of cash-flow management and contingency planning, make sure you can cope with the unexpected (e.g. late payments, unanticipated costs, cost over-runs etc.).
- Make sure you are in compliance with your National rules and regulations.
- Ensure that your financial systems are wholly compatible with your national accounting conventions.



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Making it work

9. Monitoring & Evaluation

'A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are all volitional and are the portals of discovery'.

9.1 The rationale for the obligation to record what happened and to assess what difference it makes.

EQUAL with its accent on innovation, its partnerships and its objective to influence policy and practice, presents a very special series of monitoring and evaluation challenges.

An on-going monitoring and assessment will:

- support sound implementation and management of the TCA;
- help to assess the added value of the transnational co-operation;
- contribute to the validation and mainstreaming of good practice;
- allow to draw lessons for the next programming period.

In this context individual DPs are requested to:

- **monitor and evaluate their own DP and transnational work and achievements**, assessing them continuously to improve management, performance and impact;
- **provide data and information for national and EU-level evaluations** (Managing Authorities/National Support Structures give guidance on what data must be monitored, recorded and made available for this);
- **collect information and document experience and results for the thematic networks** established at national and EU-level. This refers in particular to providing evidence for the advantages of the new approaches developed and tested, demonstrating what works and what does not, and why. Experience and results will be consolidated by these thematic networks which exist to identify, validate and disseminate good practice. Member States also have national mainstreaming strategies and specify the role they expect DPs and the thematic networks to play in identifying good practice.

Therefore, each transnational partnership must state in its Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA), how it will monitor and evaluate its own activities.

This obligation to monitor and evaluate lies equally with all transnational partners. The partnership must decide at its outset how it will be done, and who will do it.

Example: Importance of monitoring and evaluation (TCA 908 ARBORES)

Monitoring and evaluating the transnational work is very important to the transnational partnership. The transnational co-ordinators of each DP are taking part in the evaluation, as is the technical staff of the member DPs. Continuous evaluation of the transnational process creates a more dynamic exchange of experience and methodology. Monitoring seminars have been extended to two days, and a participative approach has been extended also to the work constructing common products and materials.

The Logical Framework Approach adapted for EQUAL and described in the Partnership toolkit can also be a useful evaluation tool. It is illustrated in Brief 5, and is fully explained in the Guide on Partnership Building ([also available on the European EQUAL website](#)).

9.2 Monitoring

Monitoring gives an answer to what happened. In transnational partnerships it is vital to be able to monitor process, signal progress, record success, and have early warning of problems and underperformance. In public programmes, partnerships must provide evidence of what they are doing.

Each EQUAL transnational partnership must have a plan and a process for monitoring its activities and achievements. Monitoring reports will normally be provided for transnational management meetings. DPs should include this information in their monitoring reports to their Managing Authorities.

In a transnational partnership, much of the relevant information is distributed over all partner DPs. This common body of information has to be organised and shared, and whatever monitoring process is used it must:

- reliably assemble information so as to be able to record performance against planned outputs and milestones;
- provide each partner with access to information from the whole partnership about the progress of the transnational co-operation.



There is no set way of doing this, but **two good practice suggestions** emerge from the Round 1 of EQUAL:

- the best way of organising information for monitoring is to make it part of the job of the transnational co-ordinator;
- the best way of sharing information is to establish a transnational management website (a page on one of the partners' websites can be used) on which everything can be stored, and to which all partners have access; a website can become a forum for open dialogue between the partners; it can also be made public, with confidential parts like budgets held in password-protected files.

9.3 Evaluation

Evaluation of transnational co-operation in EQUAL must assess three things:

- the **relevance** of the activities and results, indicating the extent to which the common objectives met common needs and addressed common issues;
- the **efficiency** (the relation between inputs and outputs) and **effectiveness** (results in relation to objectives) with which activities are planned, managed and executed;
- **impact** – the value the transnational work has added to the activities and results of each DP involved in the short term, and the contribution on the policy and practice of decision makers and stakeholders at European, national and local levels, on the longer term.

Example: A joint evaluation approach (TCAs 2695 ADAPTATION AND INNOVATION NETWORK)

The Adaptation and Innovation Network has signed a joint evaluation agreement with another TCA involving a total of 9 Member States (see the ECDB for more details). The idea is to test innovative methods and tools that can strengthen the mainstreaming process nationally and internationally.

They are assessing good practice by:

- exchanging relevant reports and documents;
- working meetings to design evaluation tools and methods;
- using transnational meetings to compare and evaluate via questionnaires and observation;
- joint production of interim and final reports.

Evaluating transnational partnerships

Evaluation starts right at the beginning of the transnational co-operation. It is part of an organised learning process which involves systematic planning, monitoring and an on-going assessment of objectives, activities and outcomes/results. Therefore, EQUAL transnational co-operation partnerships in Round 2 will need to plan an evaluation cycle to fit in with the lifecycle of your transnational partnership.

As in the evaluation of most EQUAL transnational partnerships, an on-going assessment of activities and achievements, based on common planning, with continuous feedback to the co-ordinators and managers of the transnational partnerships (self-assessment) is the approach most commonly used. This may be done exclusively by the partners themselves, or it may be done with the aid of an external evaluator. If the external evaluator develops evaluation criteria and indicators in collaboration with the transnational partners, the approach is still essentially one of self-assessment.

Example: Peer review (TCA 1007 IRIS)

This TCA builds on a previous Horizon partnership, and uses a peer-review evaluation system. The approach is participative:

- the partners have jointly designed the evaluation tools and methodology;
- the DPs have each acted as evaluators on a rotation basis.

In addition to the peer review process, the TCA has used an independent evaluator who provides methodological support in the good practice exchange process during staff exchange visits, transnational seminars and steering group meetings.



Project life cycle	Evaluation cycle Why? What? Who? How? When?
<p>Preparation Phase (formerly Action 1)</p> <p>DPs search for partners DPs negotiate with partners TCAs approved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources – are these adequate in terms of the aims and objectives of the transnational co-operation? • Activities & events – are these an appropriate way to achieve the goals stated in your TCA, and are they conducted effectively? • Indicators – are they SMART (see Partnership guide) • Participation – is the participation in the transnational partnership both widespread and inclusive? Is it real or token?
<p>Implementation Phase (formerly Action 2)</p> <p>Transnational partnership begins work</p> <p>Concludes work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactions – Has the transnational partnership provoked useful (positive) reactions from other key partners and players? Is it showing signs of changing behaviour and attitudes (by, for example, other regional organisations concerned with labour market activities)? • Awareness & learning – is the transnational partnership informing people and institutions about new developments and new ways of thinking about labour market issues? • Actions – has the transnational partnership stimulated appropriate and effective actions in terms of stated objectives and goals, especially with respect to influencing labour market policies and practices?
<p>Dissemination phase (may be funded with implementation budget or Action 3)</p>	<p>Impacts – has the transnational partnership begun to have positive impacts on the environment in which it operates (better quality jobs, increased employability of workers, enhanced social inclusion, improved equality of opportunity, etc.)?</p> <p>Decisions taken on type of evaluation and budget allowed for it</p> <p>Evaluation plan made operational. Internal/external evaluators appointed</p> <p>Final evaluation of Implementation delivered</p>

A learning approach

EQUAL transnational partnerships benefit most from a **learning evaluation**, which involves all partners in defining the questions to be answered, criteria for success, and the assessment of the results. This approach reflects the ongoing evaluations carried out at national level, and the ongoing assessment of each of the participating DPs. **Whether or not an independent evaluator is used, a significant degree of self-assessment is appropriate to EQUAL.**

Example: Evaluation indicators (TCA 2886 PLANQUALITY)

Overall indicators selected for evaluation of 'EQUAL Voices'

- A. Attainment of goals in the transnational partnership
Plan Quality of direct exchange of information and communication between partners
- B. Potential impact of transnational work on national or European policy or practice
- C. Potential for the development of approaches, materials, training methods commonly used by the partners
- D. Effectiveness of the organisation of the transnational partnership
- E. Publicity achieved for transnational activities



Some guidelines for evaluating Transnational Partnerships

It is impossible to evaluate either a DP or a transnational partnership effectively unless there is first clarity about:

- the objectives of the partnership and the work;
- a series of performance targets or indicators that can be used to demonstrate first the relevance of what is being done, and second its impact.

Key questions and issues to examine	Who to involve	Possible methods	Possible indicators and performance targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources – Are these adequate to deliver the aims and objectives of the transnational co-operation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy makers (at EU and national levels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of plans, budgets and meeting records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Participation in budget planning</i> • <i>Costs broken down by activity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions and activities – Are these appropriate to the goals set out in the TCA? Are they well planned and carried out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP and project sponsors and funding agencies (including the EC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agreed eligibility of all activities</i> • <i>Clarity of workplan</i> • <i>Delivery of workplan to time</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation – Is participation in the transnational partnership both widespread and inclusive? Is it real or token? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme managers (Managing Authorities and National Support Structures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All partners with defined tasks and roles</i> • <i>All partners attending all meetings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts – What impact has the transnational partnership had on job creation, employability, social inclusion, equality of opportunity? What impacts on learning? What impacts on labour market strategy? Has there been learning in one Member State from policy or practice in another? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP partners and your transnational partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires Interviews Evaluation questionnaires accompanying events and products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Partners' adoption of shared methods and products</i> • <i>Evidence of use and usefulness</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and learning – Is there evidence that partners or others have learned about developments and new ways of thinking about labour market issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific discriminated, excluded groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires Interviews Evaluation questionnaires accompanying events and products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All partners disseminating their work in all partner countries</i> • <i>Aspects of work translated into other languages for dissemination (either by producer or by user)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes and management - Has the partnership been well-planned and managed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP partners and your transnational partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of documents and record Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work completed to time</i> • <i>Work completed to budget</i> • <i>Partners having fulfilled their planned roles</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes and products – How complete and effective are they? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP partners and your transnational partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer review Questionnaires Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Products and outcomes those that were planned</i> • <i>Differences and amendments noted</i> • <i>Assessments of their quality and fitness for purpose</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future collaboration between the partners – Is it likely that this will take place after the work of the EQUAL transnational partnership ends? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP partners and your transnational partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Instances of partners making direct use of materials of the partnership</i> • <i>Evidence of partners changing policy or practice in the light of partnership discussions</i> • <i>Partners identifying related work interests</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The added value of transnational co-operation - Can this be identified and described in terms of policy and practice at local, regional, national and EU levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP partners and your transnational partners • Policy makers (at EU and national levels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References to national and EU policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Achievements against planned results</i> • <i>Achievements against unplanned results</i> • <i>Additions to national DP workplan</i> • <i>References to them in policy or practice materials</i>



Internal or external evaluation?

Many partnerships rely on internal evaluation. If external evaluation is planned, a budget needs to be provided.

Type of Evaluation	Key characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	<p>A group of staff or stakeholders from the partnership design the evaluation and oversee it. The work is spread out amongst the partners, and then collated and written up by one of them, almost certainly one whose mother tongue is also the partnership's common language.</p> <p>Can also involve a system of peer review, in which partners evaluate each others' processes and products.</p>	<p>Participatory – possible to involve a wide range of staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the process.</p>	<p>Time-consuming – it may seem to be a cheaper option, but it has to be designed and administered, and it usually means that the manager or co-ordinator has an extra series of reports to write.</p> <p>The quality of the end result is likely to be determined by the quality of the weakest link in the partnership. One partner who fails to deliver compromises the whole effort.</p>
External	<p>An external evaluator offers the partnership an evaluation approach and design. This may be the external evaluator of one of the partners – very likely a partner for whom the common language is the mother tongue.</p>	<p>Can provide an extra, experienced input to the work.</p> <p>The evaluation should be professionally carried out to a plan approved by the partnership.</p>	<p>Can be insensitive to the underlying objectives of the partners, and in a transnational partnership it is difficult for a single person to understand fully the cultural issues that affect the actions of each partner.</p>
A combination of internal and external	<p>In a transnational partnership, one external evaluator manages the evaluation process and writes the reports. The partners themselves co-design the process with the evaluator, and provide the core material.</p> <p>Peer review can also be used in this option.</p>	<p>Can limit the cost of an external evaluation.</p> <p>Can become a part of the partnership's learning process.</p> <p>Peer review process, managed by the evaluator, can be powerful and effective.</p>	<p>Difficult to administer unless the external evaluator is closely involved in the partnership.</p>



Glossary and list of abbreviations

An official EQUAL Glossary is provided by the European Commission and is available on the web. The Glossary contains descriptions of EQUAL 'jargon' and terms. It is translated into the languages of the European Union. Here are some abbreviations used in the guide that may need additional explanation.

Abbreviation	Term	Explanation
DPA	Development Partnership Agreement	Agreement signed between all national partners, describing the work and the resources they will put into it.
DP	Development Partnership	This is how EQUAL activities are implemented.
ECDB	EQUAL Common Database	Web database that contains descriptions of all EQUAL DPs.
ESF	European Social Fund	One of the four European Structural Funds. ESF deals with human resource development – includes the EQUAL Community Initiative – and is managed at national level by the Member States.
ETCIM	EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Internet Module	Web tool that all EQUAL transnational partnerships use to develop and secure approval for their TCAs.
EES	European Employment Strategy	The European Union's strategy to commit the Member States to more active labour market policies.
MA	Managing Authority	The unit of a Member State's Government that is responsible for administering EQUAL.
NAP	National Employment Action Plan	Member State's response to the EES, setting out how its national policies will deliver the EES' objectives.
NSS	National Support Structure	Member State unit responsible for giving day-to-day help and monitoring to EQUAL DPs.
TCA	Transnational Co-operation Agreement	Agreement signed between all transnational partners, describing the work and the resources they will put into it. In order to be valid it must be approved by each DP's national MA.



Annex with Further Explanation and Examples



1. The EQUAL Community Initiative

1) The European Employment Strategy (EES), launched at the Luxembourg summit in 1997, offers a practical framework for a European labour market strategy. Broad priorities for the EES are established annually in the form of European Employment Guidelines based on three overarching objectives:

- **Full employment**
- **Quality and productivity at work**
- **Cohesion and an inclusive labour market**

The three objectives are achieved through ten Guidelines.

These guidelines are then used to model national action described in National Action Plans for Employment (NAPs) that set out each country's proposed activities to create more and better quality jobs during the year in question.

For more information on the EES please consult the [webpage of the European Commission](#).

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2) The **nine EQUAL Themes** are:

- a) Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all;
- b) Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market;
- c) 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;
- d) Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs;
- e) 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;
- f) Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies;
- g) 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;
- h) Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation;
- i) Where eligible, helping asylum seekers to gain access to labour markets and, in the case of those facing repatriation, helping with education and training which will be useful to them in their home country.

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1. The EQUAL Community Initiative

3) A comparative table between the **EES Guidelines 2004** and the **EQUAL Themes**:

<p>The 2004 European Employment Strategy (EES) priorities for action (Guidelines)</p>	<p>The Nine EQUAL Themes address the human resource priorities of the EES</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active and preventative measures for the unemployed and inactive • Foster entrepreneurship and promote job creation • More and better investment in human capital and strategies for lifelong learning • Address change and promote adaptability in work • Increase labour supply and promote active ageing • Gender equality • Promote the integration of and combat the discrimination against people at disadvantage in the labour market • Make work pay through incentives to enhance work attractiveness • Transform undeclared work into regular employment • Promote occupational and geographical mobility and improve job matching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market that must be open to all. b) Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market. c) 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. d) Strengthening the social economy (third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs. e) 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. f) Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other technologies. g) 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. h) Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation.
	<p>Not included in the EES, but also an EQUAL priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Supporting the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

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1. The EQUAL Community Initiative

4) The **mechanisms to reinforce the quality of transnational activities** between DPs and to ensure relevant and usable outcomes in the EQUAL Initiative include:

- **Synchronisation of the implementation of national EQUAL programmes** to ensure effective transnational co-operation.
- Support and assistance during the preparation phase to assist in the identification of suitable transnational partners (at least one) and the drawing up of a Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA). This will include access to advice and to a database of DPs in all Member States.
- Requirements for strategic plans and sound work programmes for the Implementation Phase (Action 2), at both the national and transnational levels, which empower all partners of DPs to engage in the work.
- Common rules for sharing of resources and common requirements for planning of a transnational work programme.
- An emphasis on dissemination and transfer of results, horizontally and vertically, in the framework of a dissemination and mainstreaming strategy for each national EQUAL programme to ensure maximum impact on national policy development (a multiplier effect).

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2. Transnational co-operation

1) Some of the **specific mechanisms and instruments** which have been incorporated into the design of the EQUAL Initiative to help DPs and participants overcome some of the difficulties hitherto associated with setting up and maintaining transnational partnerships are:

- Synchronisation across Member States of the calendar for the start of the transnationality window (January 1st, 2005) to assist in the co-ordination of transnational development and activities.
- Commitment by the Managing Authorities (MAs) of the Member States to consult one another before approving any Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA).
- Assistance from the National Support Structures (NSSs), established by the MAs, in the development of DPs and transnational partnerships and of their associated integrated work programmes.
- Financial support and advice to DPs during the preparation phase to assist effective transnational partner search and for the development of quality Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCAs);
- The Commission:
 - has provided the electronic infrastructure for a database suitable for transnational partner search-and-find activities;
 - is providing an electronic platform to facilitate the presentation and update of, and consultation on, TCAs;
 - is facilitating a forum for an exchange of good practice in transnational collaboration;
- Participation by DPs in thematic networks.

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2) Matrix for illustrating transnational formal and informal links between organisations or individuals playing different roles in the participating DPs

The following example illustrates a simple model of a transnational partnership where co-operation is not restricted to peers, but includes also links with other actors

DPI	DP2							
	Pres	Co-ord	TrB	LA	TU	Empl As	Tr	LAS
DP President/Co-ordinator		X						
TCA Co-ordinator		X						
Training Body			X					
Local Authority								
Trade Union					X			
Employers Association			X					
Trainees			X				X	
Local Employment Service					X	X		X

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2. Transnational co-operation

3) Model 1: Exchange of information and experiences

This model usually represents the starting point of transnational co-operation and is also a common denominator for all the following models. Partners exchange information about their strategies and the background to their activities. Partners have not explicitly defined joint concrete objectives of their co-operation at this stage.

For example, two or more DPs (in different Member States) are each seeking to develop training packages to help disadvantaged groups gain re-entry to the labour market. As part of their transnational co-operation, they simply exchange information with each other about themselves, their different contexts and their different approaches to developing the training package. Some useful ideas may be exchanged but this happens by chance, rather than by design, and in some cases there may be no useful transfer of knowledge, experience or expertise.

This approach to transnational co-operation helps a DP to assess and **benchmark** its own activities and outcomes in a European context.

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4) Model 2: Parallel development of innovative approaches

In this model, partners share and pursue a common specific objective, yet work relatively independently (in parallel) of each other on the practical realisation of their development/testing/validating work. The exchange of experiences is less general and more systematically goal-related than in the first model. It is a systematic attempt to secure support in the development of innovations from partners with common objectives.

With reference to the preceding example (Model 1), two or more DPs assess and evaluate each other's objectives in a systematic fashion and agree a common set of goals, approaches, methods evaluation criteria etc. However, in achieving the goals and in the development/testing/validation, they work relatively independently of each other. Having agreed and negotiated a common objective, innovation, discoveries and some transfer of know-how is exchanged in a systematic manner.

This model of transnational co-operation also helps a DP to **benchmark** its own activities and outcomes.

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5) Model 3: Import, export or adoption of new approaches and their adaptation to own situation

This model is usually a variant or continuation of the "parallel development" model (Model 2), coming into play when it becomes apparent in the course of transnational co-operation that one DP already has a largely "complete" and validated solution for a common problem. In that case, transnational co-operation allows partners to have access to insights that the other partner already possesses.

In the context of this model two or more DPs routinely share the results of the development of their testing and validating work by explaining what works and what does not, and why. Each partner benefits from the exchange of experience resulting in some modifications to the content, style and approach of the original solutions. In such cases, the exchange of know-how between DPs concentrates on finding ways to improve it further.

This model of transnational co-operation could be complemented by forms of "mentoring" or exchange models in order to facilitate the transfer and integration process. It comprises also a form of 'shadowing',



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especially in cases where one or more partners seek to transfer expertise and know-how from another that already has extensive experience in the chosen domain.

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6) Model 4: Joint service, product or system development – division of tasks with a common objective.

This model often results from partnerships that have been in existence for some time. It implies a common perception of the problem and an intention to find a joint solution to it, making conscious use of individual strengths. The steps required to solve the problem are defined and the resulting tasks divided up among the transnational partners

Again with reference to the training package example (as described in Model 1), two or more DPs agree at the outset on common goals and the joint development of the training packages. They work together continuously to find a common 'solution' that fits their individual needs, which may include an agreed division of labour and tasks according to their different specialist competences. In such cases, it is likely to be helpful to form a transnational partnership with one or more DP (in other Member States) that have complimentary experience and skills and resources. In this context, it is likely that each DP will need to tailor the common 'product' to meet the needs in its own local circumstances once the common solution has been achieved. The need for such tailoring needs to be borne in mind at the beginning when the possibilities for joint development of a common product or system is under discussion with potential transnational partners.

In this case, transnational co-operation is similar to '**twinning**' in that the two (or more) partners seek mutual and equivalent benefits from their joint working and relationship with one another. Because the relationship is likely to be enduring, the mutual benefits are often gained over an extended period of time and may fall outside the scope of what was originally anticipated.

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7) Model 5: Exchange of key actors/trainees/trainers and others.

The exchange of participants or staff between transnational partners is an activity or a sub-model which usually occurs in parallel with one or more of the other four models. But these activities need to go beyond study visits (otherwise they would belong to the first model of co-operation). There has to be a precise definition of the specific objectives of the exchange in relation to further development and progress towards the common transnational goals.

With reference to the preceding example (in Model 4), transnational co-operation is likely to benefit from arrangements for the exchange of personnel (trainers, content and system designers, trainees etc.) between the transnational partners, for example, to test and validate joint product/system developments as they occur. Of course, such staff exchanges will also be useful to facilitate joint design and development as well.

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8) Some DPs will have quite specific ideas about the kinds of partners in another Member State they are looking for and want to work with. This is likely to be the case when a DP is working on a very specific topic or with a well-defined type of disadvantaged persons (e.g. working to overcome accessibility to work due to gender). In general, however, partnerships between DPs in different Member States do not have to be based on working within the same EQUAL Theme. Working with similar types of organisation, trying



2. Transnational co-operation

to solve the same type of problem, or seeking to integrate a similar social group can be an equally important focus. All EQUAL Themes should be considered in planning for transnationality and searching for partners.

For more details, see Chapter/Brief 4, 'Finding a Partner'.

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9) In the grant letter, DPs will be allocated to one of the priority Themes selected by their Member State (see below). In developing transnational partnerships, DPs will choose partners working within the same or other Themes in one or more other Member States. The administrative allocation to a specific theme should not place limitations on the scope of transnational co-operation but could help to ensure a clear focus and development of common objectives in the negotiation of a Transnational Co-operation Agreement and work programme between partners.

The EQUAL Initiative is thematic in its orientation, having 9 Themes. All Member States have agreed to prioritise the thematic field dealing with the integration of asylum seekers. In addition, within their Community Initiative Programmes (CIPs), most Member States have selected from amongst the remaining eight Themes a number of priority fields. Five Member States (Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Netherlands and Portugal) have chosen to prioritise all nine fields. For a full list of the Member State priority fields, see [Brief I](#).

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10) Truly effective transnational collaboration and partnership tends to be costly in terms of both **human and financial resources** and this, again, places limits on what can be realistically achieved. Partnership managers, with their transnational partners, should evaluate carefully what it will cost in terms of time and money to realise their objectives and, if necessary, should be prepared to adjust the objectives to ensure they are achievable.

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11) **Time** and time-scale for delivery of outcomes is another limiting factor. Delivery of the work programme takes place under the implementation phase of the DP and this will be of 2 – 3 years duration. Dissemination activities will take place as part of implementation but may be a separate activity that runs in parallel with implementation of the innovation. New practices, systems and products take time to develop test and validate, and yet more time to disseminate and introduce into mainstream policy. Again, DPs should recognise these constraints and develop realistic objectives accordingly.

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12) The rich diversity of European local communities, regions and Member States provides ample opportunities to learn from one another and forms the basis for the principle of transnational co-operation in the EQUAL Initiative. Diversity, however, can also bring problems, especially for those not already familiar with transnational co-operation in a European context. **Differences** of culture, language, and approach can mean that things take longer and are more difficult to achieve. Prior experience of working transnationally is an enormous benefit – you know what to expect. If you lack such experience, intensive dialogue and careful planning with potential transnational partners at an early stage will be essential in order to anticipate, and overcome, any potential difficulties.

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3. Preparing for Transnational Co-operation

1) The hypothetical example below summarises the initial answers developed by the DP promoters in response to the key questions raised above. For EQUAL, these answers will need to be more complex, as EQUAL will promote multi-actor and multi-level transnational linkages

Example of a first outline of the transnational aspects

In our DP, we propose at the local/regional level to:

1. Produce an interactive package about supported employment programmes promoting the integration of people with disabilities into SMEs.
2. The package is targeted at SME proprietors and at advisors working in employment agencies.
3. The take-up by SMEs of the financial and support opportunities associated with such employment programmes is known to be low and SME proprietors know little about them. The project will enable us to establish closer links between SMEs and employment agencies which should lead to the provision of continuing training courses.
4. The project is innovative because it aims to provide information about new programmes to a new target group in a new way that will allow users to calculate for themselves the potential financial benefits.

Transnational aspects:

5. The package itself will contain important transnational aspects, since we aim to give examples of how such schemes have been successful elsewhere (in other Member States) and, in addition, the package will be available in multi-lingual forms (i.e. each of the partner languages).
6. The product will be developed by a transnational team who will exchange information and know-how and jointly conduct a comparative study. Study visits will be carried out and the product will be tailored to the context of each participating Member State, as well as tested and disseminated in each participating Member State.

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3. Preparing for Transnational Co-operation

2) Checklist of resources required

Resources & Conditions	Exist	Can acquire	Unlikely to acquire
A partnership team with members who, between them, have the right aptitudes, skills and experience.	[]	[]	[]
A team leader who is prepared to make the necessary time commitment, be a concerned host to transnational visitors, and well informed on transnational matters.	[]	[]	[]
Sufficient time allocation to the team for the transnational elements as well as for the other DP activities.	[]	[]	[]
Language skills or access to translators/interpreters	[]	[]	[]
Availability of office and communications systems (telephones, fax, e-mail, computers with Internet access*, photocopier(s)).	[]	[]	[]
The commitment of your own organisation's key players (Chief Executive, senior managers, other key members of staff).	[]	[]	[]
A Development Partnership Steering Committee comprising supporters and organisations who wish to be associated with, supportive of, or provide resources for, your transnational work.	[]	[]	[]
Mechanisms to transfer experiences and results from transnational work to all partners and participants of the DPs, and to enable them to participate in transnational learning processes.	[]	[]	[]

* **NOTE:** Internet access will be essential for finding transnational partners using the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB) and for registering a Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA).

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3) Checklist of questions regarding potential partners

- What characteristics (physical, organisational, historical, activity-related or experiential) should potential partners have?
- What specific contributions (knowledge, experience, skills etc) are you expecting from a potential partner?
- Do you require that potential partners have prior experience of working in a transnational context?
- Are there specific criteria that prospective partners should satisfy such as location, common language, or (say) experience of working closely with SMEs etc?
- What can you and your partnership development offer to potential partners?

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3.Preparing for Transnational Co-operation

4) Profile of your ideal Partner

Profile of your Ideal Partner		
Criterion	Preference for	Satisfactory if
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country • Type of organisation, size • Labour market configuration (problem, barrier, dynamics) • EQUAL Themes • Approach • Sector • Area/field of co-operation • Experience of area/Theme • Type of transnational activities sought • Previous transnational experience • Working languages • Other organisations in the local partnership/steering group 		

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5) Overcoming cultural differences:

- Be open-minded. Accept that there are other ways of working. Be patient.
- Try to obtain information about your partner's country and culture beforehand, and not only during meetings. Sources of information include: the web, public libraries, institutions like the British Council, Goethe Institut, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Alliance Française, international Chambers of Commerce and more specialised institutions such as CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) and ETF (European Training Foundation).
- Do not just rely on written communication. Engage in the discussion culture. Do not use a stopwatch for timekeeping. Be sensitive to formal and informal cultures in other Member States.
- Agree a common partnership language. This may often be English, but take into account that French may be the first foreign language of some Southern European partners.
- Ensure you have sufficient language capacity in-house. Arrange translation and interpretation, if needed (do not forget to budget for this. It is expensive). Be creative in getting help, e.g. from personal acquaintances, local language teachers or students.
- Discuss with your partners exactly what you mean by certain concepts. Make a glossary of terms, or use graphics and drawings as this avoids misunderstanding at a later stage.
- When chairing a meeting, make sure that everybody understands and can follow the discussion. Regularly summarise what has been said and check understanding. Write main headings on flip-charts. Make sure that everybody has the chance and adequate time to express their opinion.
- Never underestimate the importance and influence of language, especially if it is not your own.
- Clarify what power partners have to take decisions concerning the partnership and its meetings.
- Explain the culture of your organisation to your partners and try to find out about theirs.
- Do not be afraid to speak in meetings and to express your doubts when appropriate. Remember that meetings are the most direct way to clarify your goals and to explore differences of opinion. This avoids frustration afterwards.
- Explain the strengths of your DP and country.

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3. Preparing for Transnational Co-operation

6) Five types of seminars should be considered in addressing these issues:

- **Passing on of experience seminars** which exploit the experience of people who have carried out intercultural projects, spent time abroad, and participated in intercultural negotiations, etc.
- **Information oriented seminars** are not seminars in the strict sense of the word, but more often lectures giving general information on the ethnic and religious make-up of a cultural region as well as its climate, and political and social contexts.
- **Behavioural oriented seminars** advise and give tips on how to behave, usually in the form of rules as to “what should be avoided at all costs”; for example, that offering one’s opened palm to another person (“moutza”) in Greece is considered an insult.
- **Self-reflection oriented seminars** to experience and understand one’s own reactions to foreignness and the culturally specific norms and values that are the basis of one’s own actions (usually employing cultural simulation exercises).
- **Seminars in understanding foreign cultures** contrast the cultural standards which regulate co-operation between partners. Cultural standards are defined as “all types of perceiving, thinking, judging and acting which are considered normal, self-evident, typical and binding by a majority of a certain culture” and by which one’s own and foreign behaviour is judged and regulated*.

* Thomas, A. (Hrsg.) (1993). Kulturvergleichende Psychologie. Göttingen: Hogrefe

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7) Intellectual Property Rights and user rights of third parties

DPs have to ensure that all the results obtained (products, instruments, methods, etc) will be made public, and will be made fully available to third parties, exclusively for their own use. This obligation applies also to the results of common transnational activities. Bear in mind that the law and related regulations regarding the sale of products of funded activities (and intellectual property) are not uniform throughout Europe. However, according to Structural Funds Regulations, revenue, during the contract period, from sales, services, fees etc. represent income which reduces the amount of ESF co-financing. You therefore should seek guidance from your Managing Authority if your results may have a commercial value, and if you plan to exploit the results commercially.

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4. Finding Transnational Partners

1) Consider the following questions in organising your search:

- Who is responsible for co-ordinating this work within your DP, and what mandate has to be given to whom?
- Who is responsible for making contacts?
- How, and with what resources, will the search be carried out?
- On what criteria will the partners finally be selected, and by whom?
- What are the deadlines envisaged for the various stages of this task?

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2) You will be able to search the ECDB using:

Full Text Search: allows you to make queries on the basis of any string of letters (key words) in all the database fields. The system allows you also to search a given word in a particular field (e.g. in the DP description, in the DP objectives). If you wish to refine a query after a first search you can apply further criteria.

Combined/Advanced Search: Allows a search with more precise criteria, combining different filters with the full text search facility. For instance, you can be looking for the word 'exclusion' in the field 'DP description' (full text search) but only amongst the French and English DPs which are working with the Theme 'Facilitating access to the labour market' (Combined/advanced search). The difference between combined and advanced search is the number of filters that can be used.

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3) Some tips to help you in using the ECDB

- Ensure you begin by setting out clearly the essential (i.e. minimum) characteristics that you are hoping to find in potential transnational partners and their work programmes. Begin with as broad a search as possible so as not to exclude potentially interesting partners.
- The EQUAL guidance has previously stated that DPs should *preferably* choose partners working within the same *Theme*. Experience shows that you should endeavour to think creatively about the possibilities for developing transnational co-operation. Similar activities are found in several Themes depending on Member State focus in each Theme.
- Remain alert to the fact that the way that issues and problems are classified amongst the nine EQUAL Themes can vary from one Member State to another. For example, training for people with disabilities can fit more than one of the Themes.
- Bear in mind that creative and innovative partnerships more often than not occur when *dissimilar* partners with *different* experiences and expertise (but common goals) come together.
- Begin to fine-tune your search only when you are satisfied that you have enough information to safely narrow the search criteria.
- Be aware that, especially for searches in English or French, search results may be only a summary of the original submission.
- Take care when interpreting the results of a search because the same words can have different meanings in different languages and contexts. Make use of the [Glossary on the EQUAL website](#).
- Be prepared to use phone, fax or e-mail to request clarification or amplification from another DP.
- Don't expect to find partners much the same as your partnership, working on the same problem in the same ways. Even if you do, ask yourself if co-operation with such a partner would be sufficiently rewarding.
- Finally, be aware of politically correct 'codes' and terminology and don't jump to conclusions. Consult your NSS on such matters.

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4. Finding Transnational Partners

4) Based on their Community Initiative Programmes (CIPs), each Member State has determined their own **financial limits** on expenditure by DPs in the preparation phase (formerly Action 1). In some countries, DPs can spend as much as EUR 40 000 on exploratory visits etc. as part of establishing transnational partnerships. In a few cases, the limit can be as low as EUR 10 000. You should be aware of these variations when planning exploratory visits, bearing in mind that prospective partners may be more financially constrained than you. Also the degree of co-financing may vary and this can further affect this dynamic. For full details on each Member State please consult the Country specific information on Transnationality available on the [EQUAL website](#) from the end of 2004.

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5) Some tips for **preparing for the initial meeting** with potential partners:

- The best way of getting to know your partners is through face-to-face meetings, in which you can find out more about partner organisations and the systems in which they operate. Most important, you have time to discuss and to raise questions.
- Take time to listen carefully to everybody. Use this opportunity to find out the aims and methods of the various DPs and what different actors have in common.
- Make sure that you meet the people with different roles and from different organisations who will be key for driving the DP - and not just consultants, the people running the DP's secretariat, or representatives of sponsoring bodies.
- Exchange written material before the meeting: information on your DP and its outline strategy, as well as on the causes of discrimination and exclusion and the national/regional training or employment policies and practice which your DP intends to tackle; maybe a mapping of your DP's key actors and the broader regional/ sectoral policies into which they fit.
- Be aware that terms such as training, education, placement, guidance and labour market may cover different aspects in other countries.
- Look for partners that will be compatible regarding: main objectives and core activities of the participating organisations; expectations concerning the outcomes of transnational work; motivation and commitment to transnational work; work style and attitude; the use of a common working language.

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6) Decisions about a transnational partner need to be based on:

- A good understanding of one another's aims, and an appreciation of the key factors and limits underlying their activities;
- Understanding one another's cultural, legislative and commercial contexts;
- Familiarity with one another's organisational structure and procedures;
- Complementarity of expertise and experience to foster innovation: be wary of the tendency to look for organisations too similar to your own;
- An agreement regarding tested means of communication; and
- Having established good relationships.

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4. Finding Transnational Partners

7) When setting up the **first meeting** with one or more potential partner, a number of points should be taken into account by the host organisation:

- Consider organising an official reception to heighten local awareness of the DP's strategy and to bind your DP's key partners more closely together.
- Ensure that the visitors are informed in advance about logistical arrangements (travel, accommodation, meeting schedules etc.) and that there is a clear understanding about who pays which costs.
- Organise the meeting venue(s) with care, ensuring all necessary equipment is available and in working order and that the layout is appropriate for both formal and informal exchanges.
- Consider employing an external expert to facilitate discussions; if you do, make sure they are well briefed in advance.
- Plan the agenda carefully ensuring that all issues receive adequate time for discussion and that all participants can intervene.
- Always allow a generous amount of time for each participant to introduce him or herself, and make sure that this happens at the beginning of the meeting. This ensures that everyone speaks during the first session, which is important for the cohesion of the group.
- Make sure that the agenda includes opportunities for your prospective partner to present their background, their views, and their needs.
- Use the meeting and agenda to identify the resources available to the potential partnership, those that need to be acquired, and any problems that need to be resolved.
- Aim to conclude the meeting with the drafting of an initial work schedule and plan of action, procedures that need to be put in place, etc.
- Endeavour to produce and transmit a written summary of the main decisions of the meeting as soon as possible afterwards since a written record can help overcome any misunderstandings that can arise due to language barriers.

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8) The Accession Countries in September 2004 Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia.

The PHARE Countries

- Bulgaria
- Romania

For more information, consult: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index.htm>

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9) The States covered by the **TACIS** Programme are:

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Georgia
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Moldova
- Russian Federation
- Tajikistan
- Turkmenistan
- Ukraine, and
- Uzbekistan



4. Finding Transnational Partners

Covered from 2003 by the **ALA** programme:

- Mongolia

For more information, consult: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/tacis/index.htm

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10) The countries involved in the **MEDA** Programme are:

- Algeria
- Egypt
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Morocco
- Palestinian Authorities
- Syria
- Tunisia, and
- Israel

For more information, consult:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/euro_med_partnership/

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11) The countries covered by the **CARDS** Programme are:

- Albania
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Croatia
- The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

For more information, consult:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/docs/index.htm

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12) EU funds can also be made available for this kind of activity through PHARE, TACIS, MEDA and CARDS even though the procedures and timeframe of these programmes are quite different from EQUAL. Without going into technical details of programming procedures, it is useful to know about certain aspects so that you can realistically plan transnational work with a non-EU partner.

Firstly, a promoter from a non-EU country does not have access to the aforementioned funds unless its government takes *the initiative* to ask the European Commission for the funding of an EQUAL-type project under the EU programme, of which the country is a beneficiary (i.e. under PHARE for Romania, TACIS for Georgia etc.). The request needs to be integrated in a CIP-type National Programme that is submitted to the Commission on an annual or bi-annual basis.

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5. First steps towards a Transnational Agreement

1) *“In our partnership the bottom-up principle was very important. For us, the value of our international co-operation and the national projects was in having the disabled themselves as project makers.”*

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2) Appointment of a Transnational Co-ordinator

To be successful, transnational collaborative activities need to be managed effectively. Whatever arrangements are agreed between the transnational partners for the overall co-ordination of transnational activities, each DP is advised to appoint a Transnational Co-ordinator. Such an individual would take responsibility, on behalf of the DP and according to a clear mandate, for:

- identification and selection of potential transnational partners;
- negotiation of the Transnational Co-operation Agreement with transnational partners;
- development and management (with transnational partners) of the transnational work plan;
- monitoring and evaluation of transnational activities;
- organisation and management of meetings and events hosted by the DP for visits by transnational partners;
- communications with, and briefings for, members of the DP on all transnational matters (including decision making).

A transnational co-ordinator should possess the following:

- prior experience of transnational co-operation;
- knowledge of the EQUAL Theme in which the DP and its transnational partners are working;
- competence in the agreed working language of the transnational partnership;
- sensitivity to cultural differences, especially those relating to the countries of the transnational partners;
- good communication skills;
- skills of negotiation;
- organisational and management skills;
- commitment to transnational co-operation and activities.

Your DP should define very clearly the division of roles and responsibilities, especially those relating to transnational activities since the complex structures of DPs (and the varying participation of DP actors in the transnational co-operation) may not always be clear to those outside the DP. In particular, DPs should make a clear statement of its decision making structures.

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3) Realistic Agreement

Some tips to bear in mind when you are trying to reach agreement about the **work programme** and its planned outputs.

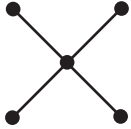

- Temper your ambitions with realism. Your objectives and planned outputs should take account of the resources which are available to achieve them and should reflect the outcomes of your “capacity audit”.
- It also goes almost without saying, that it is vital that all partners clearly understand the objectives of the transnational partnership and feel that they own them.
- If a common set of objectives can be defined and agreed amongst the partners, they will serve as a reference throughout the design phase of the transnational co-operation and its implementation.

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5. First steps towards a Transnational Agreement

4) Organisational Models

- **Designation of one Transnational Co-ordinator** (Hub and Spoke Model): One partner is selected by the others and agrees to take responsibility for the overall management and co-ordination of the transnational work programme. 
- **Rotating or Shared Co-ordination** (Consortium Model): Each partner in turn takes responsibility for the management and co-ordination of a phase (or transnational meeting) or for a segment (tasks) of the work programme according to pre-agreed definitions. When using this model, limit the tasks of the secretariat from the beginning and dispatch tasks and responsibilities to each of the partners already from the beginning. 
- **Steering Committee:** The partners establish a small steering committee on which each partner is represented and the committee assumes overall joint responsibility for the management and co-ordination of the transnational activities. The chairmanship may rotate from one meeting to the next. It may be appropriate to employ/engage a suitable external expert to support the committee.
- **Working Groups:** It may be useful to establish work groups with responsibilities for managing and co-ordinating specific segments of the work programme and their associated tasks, to look more deeply into particular issues, and to take better advantage of specific expertise among the partners.

(The third and fourth of these may be combined with either of the first two. Transnational partnerships often establish a steering committee, in addition to having either a designated or rotating co-ordinator, which meets relatively infrequently (perhaps just three or four times during the life of the partnership) and whose task is to provide more 'political' monitoring of the actions undertaken.

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5) Language

- Agree in which language(s) you will communicate, and for which purpose, for day-to-day communication between the transnational co-ordinators.
- The common partnership language may often be English, but take into account that French may be the first foreign language of some Southern European partners.
- Ensure you have sufficient language capacity in-house. Arrange translation and interpretation, if needed (and do not forget to budget for this - it is expensive). Be creative in getting help (e.g. from personal acquaintances, local language teachers or students).
- Discuss with your partners exactly what you mean by certain concepts. Make a glossary of terms as this avoids misunderstanding at a later stage.

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5. First steps towards a Transnational Agreement

6) Communication in the early stages of transnational partnership building:

When defining the next steps to develop and clarify the content and mode of future co-operation, ensure there is effective communication. Bear in mind the following points:

- Between meetings, ensure an ongoing flow of information to and from transnational partners.
- Organise regular feedback, through briefings and bilateral or formal meetings in your own DP, and ensure that all tentative agreements read during negotiations on any of the key elements of the Transnational Co-operation Agreement have the backing of the Steering Group of your own DP, and will eventually be endorsed.
- If possible, set up a communication network between all stakeholders in a developing transnational co-operation, notably those that have to make relevant contributions, such as an e-mail group, a newsletter, a regularly updated website, or an intranet facility.
- Confirm all decisions clearly in writing. Not all people may have understood the same by what has been said, and communication styles differ between people and cultures. This is not only true for communication between representatives of transnational partners, but also for discussion between the members of a DP.
- Eventually, commitments and agreements should be expressed in plain words, not in diplomatic language.
As regards follow-up activities, state clearly who has agreed to do what and by when in writing.

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7) Some tips for follow-up meetings:

- Agree some rules for communication between meetings that everybody should follow.
- List the public holidays and usual holiday periods in each partner country. Check you know everyone's normal office hours.
- Make a clear division of tasks, where everybody knows his or her responsibilities.
- Circulate agendas and practical arrangements in sufficient time before meetings.
- Circulate minutes quickly after meetings.

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8) The benefits and limitations of e-mail:

- E-mail is a very useful tool, but do not rely solely on it. Direct personal contact is crucial to make things work effectively. This is more important in some Member States than in others, so use the telephone as well.
- Make sure you have an up-to-date list of all contact people and addresses. Try to insist that everybody has a personal e-mail address, otherwise messages get lost.

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5. First steps towards a Transnational Agreement

9) Overcoming Cultural Differences:

- Be open-minded. Accept that there are other ways of working. Be patient.
- Try to obtain information about your partner's country and culture beforehand, and not only during meetings. Sources of information include: public libraries, institutions like the British Council, Goethe Institut, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Alliance française, international Chambers of Commerce, embassies and more specialised institutions like CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) and ETF (European Training Foundation); colleagues or acquaintances with transnational experience; publications of former projects; your National Support Structure.
- Do not rely just on written communication. Engage in the discussion culture. Do not use a stopwatch for timekeeping. Be sensitive to formal and informal culture in other Member States.
- Agree a common partnership language. This may often be English, but take into account that French may be the first foreign language of some Southern European partners.
- Ensure you have sufficient language capacity in-house. Arrange translation and interpretation, if needed (do not forget to budget for this, it is expensive). Be creative in getting help, e.g. from personal acquaintances, local language teachers or students.
- Discuss with your partners exactly what you mean by certain concepts. Make a glossary of terms as this avoids misunderstanding at a later stage.
- When chairing a meeting, make sure that everybody understands and can follow the discussion. Regularly summarise what has been said and check understanding. Write main headings on flipcharts. Make sure that everybody has the chance and adequate time to express their opinion.
- Never underestimate the importance and influence of language, especially if it is not your own.
- Clarify what power partners have to take decisions concerning the partnership and its meetings.
- Explain the culture of your organisation to your partners and try to find out about theirs.
- Do not be afraid to speak in meetings and to express your doubts when appropriate. Remember that meetings are the most direct way to clarify your goals and to explore differences of opinion. This avoids frustration afterwards.
- Explain the strengths of your DP and country.

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6. Completing your Transnational Co-operation Agreement

1) Transnational Co-operation between National Thematic Networks of DPs

The DPs will validate, disseminate and mainstream their experience and results not only within the framework of thematic networks at national level, but also at European level. Working platforms for this level of co-operation will be co-ordinated by the European Commission, in order to facilitate:

- thematic reviews of the strategic approaches and the results achieved;
- identification of good practice, to be reflected in the NAP Employment and the NAP Inclusion processes,
- dissemination of good practice solutions into Europe-wide discussion forums.

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2) DPs must identify at least one partner from another Member State.

Co-operation should be established between DPs selected by the Member States under EQUAL; such co-operation may in exceptional cases also extend to similar projects supported in a non-Member State eligible for funding under the PHARE, TACIS or MEDA programmes. Member States may define parameters for exceptions to the general rule, subject to the condition that the potential value added of co-operation with partners outside EQUAL is clearly identified, and that these partners are able to demonstrate their capacity to cover their own costs incurred by this co-operation.

More details can be found in Chapter/Brief 3 "Preparing for Transnational Co-operation", Chapter/Brief 4 "Finding Transnational Partners" and Chapter/Brief 5 "First steps towards a Transnational Co-operation Agreement".

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3) **TCA** ([Edit](#))

TCA Id code: 31

Rationale and Objectives | Work Programme & Working Methodology | Financial Provisions | Organisational and Decision Making Arrangements | Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures | Other

Secretary (automatically generated)

DPs involved ([Edit](#))

A. Rationale and Objectives

I. Common interests/methodology/underlying problem ([Edit](#))

Common issues (and differences) can be stated in very vague terms (e.g.: "the common underlying problems which exist are the inequality and barriers to employability faced by disadvantaged groups who are socially excluded"). It should be clear that this section is meant as an aid for discovering what DPs have in common in their national programmes, in terms of interests, problems addressed, and methodologies. The purpose is not to explain what will be their common methodology (this is a second step).



6. Completing your Transnational Co-operation Agreement

2. Lessons learned from previous relevant actions [\(Edit\)](#)

In this part partners are expected to guide their future collaboration by agreeing some principles derived from their past transnational experience (Some TCAs simply provide a list of previous projects for each DP which is not so useful).

3. The common objectives of the DPs [\(Edit\)](#)

What are the objectives of your collaboration? Indicate similarities and differences to objectives in the national work.

4. The (common/complementary) products/deliverables foreseen [\(Edit\)](#)

Here information about the common products foreseen should be given, to see what the complementarities can be to national work, etc.

5. Added value on the strategy and intended results of each of the DPs involved [\(Edit\)](#)

Specify this as precisely as possible, and in terms of possible impacts on the organisation and activities of their DPs, not only on the end beneficiaries or on their context.

6. Value added and financial viability of associated partner(s) [\(Edit\)](#)

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B. Work Programme & Working Methodology

I. Transnational activities foreseen

a. Overall transnational strategy [\(Edit\)](#)

Indicate here what you want to achieve with the transnational work jointly. Describe the strategy and approach. Make sure the tasks or activities described further down are clearly connected to one or more of the objectives.

b. Typology of activities [\(Edit\)](#)

Type of transnational activity

Rating (+ to +++)

Exchange of information and experiences

Parallel development of innovative approaches

Import, export or adoption of new approaches

Joint development

Exchange of trainees/trainers

Other

c. Description of the activities/tasks [\(Edit\)](#)

Name of the activity	Description
1.	
2.	
3.	
...	
10. (max 10)	



6. Completing your Transnational Co-operation Agreement

2. Methodology for sharing information, results and working tools ([Edit](#))

3. Time schedule for milestones, outcomes and events ([Edit](#))

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C. Financial Provisions

1. Breakdown of budget (€) for each activity ([Edit](#))

Activities	DPI	DP2	DP3	DP...	Total
1.					
2.					
3. ...					
10.					
TOTAL					

2. Arrangements for cost sharing and avoiding double funding ([Edit](#))

Cost sharing shall list individual + common costs by type of activity

[Top](#)

D. Organisational and Decision Making Arrangements

1. Contribution and responsibility of each DP ([Edit](#))

This section could benefit from being specified per activity to make things clearer for everyone involved.

2. Role and tasks of TCA secretariat and external expertise (if any) ([Edit](#))

Clarify already from the beginning what roles co-ordination and/or expertise should have in the transnational collaboration. Also clarify financial contributions to them if you decide to have them.

3. Arrangements for decision-making ([Edit](#))

4. Working language(s) ([Edit](#))

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E. Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures

1. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating transnational experience and results ([Edit](#))

What should be evaluated, how, by whom and when?

2. Mechanisms for updating work programme, working methodology and organisational arrangements ([Edit](#))

It is better to agree on how to make modifications or updates from the beginning. Be careful not to make this procedure too "heavy" since it is something you most probably have to go through.

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6. Completing your Transnational Co-operation Agreement

F. Other

1. Links to other information/material ([Edit](#))

2. Links (hyperlinks) to other linguistic versions of the TCA ([Edit](#))

Other linguistic versions of the TCA should be displayed on web pages.

3. Dates of (this version of) the TCA

1. Sent to validation by the DP in charge of the TCA secretariat
2. Validated by all DPs
3. Approved by all MA

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4) Common provisions for submission, appraisal and grant-awarding procedures agreed between Managing Authorities in all Member States.

All Member States will:

Synchronise their appraisal and granting calendars in the following way:

- The starting date of transnationality window will be January 1st, 2005.
- The starting date of implementation will be dependent on each DPs, ability to complete the preparation and send the DPA including the TCA to the Managing Authority.
- DPs will be encouraged to submit the document (DPA and TCA proposal) as soon as possible.
- Managing Authorities will appraise the document within eight weeks from receipt and consult the other Managing Authorities concerned. They will give comments and notify requests for changes to the proposed TCA as early as possible.

Support partner search activities, by mandating their NSS to assist DPs in finding appropriate partners.

Facilitate the drafting of the Draft TCAs, by ensuring that DPs appoint and mandate a contact point for transnational co-operation.

Facilitate the submission of the TCAs, by specifying, in line with national rules and practice, the language(s) in which the draft and the final versions of the TCA have to be submitted.

Apply common criteria for appraisal of the TCAs, notably by using the quality and consistency of the core elements proposed as well as the coherence with the respective Development Partnership Agreement as main appraisal criteria, and as agreed criteria for comments or objections in the consultation process.

Consult one another before approving any TCA, in order to ensure that all Managing Authorities involved will base their approval on the same version of a TCA.

Apply the common consultation procedure also for subsequent significant revisions of a TCA, for cases in which either the content of the TCA work plan or the composition of the transnational partnership have changed (new partners joined the transnational co-operation, e.g. Associate Partners or EQUAL DPs; or partners dropped out).



6. Completing your Transnational Co-operation Agreement

Minimise the number of dropouts, in particular through:

- selecting DPs for the Preparation phase (Action I) on the basis of sound criteria;
- advising DPs to establish transnational partnerships with more than one partner, but not too many;
- giving the NSS a major role to play, through consultancy and guidance, in order to ensure a high quality of both DPA and TCA, thus ensuring that most DPs (selected for preparation) can be confirmed for the implementation phase;
- grant a conditional extension for activities in the Preparation phase of up to three months to orphan DPs if all 'prevention' measures fail, notably in exceptional cases where:
 - the approval of a TCA had to be delayed due to problems in synchronisation of decision making between the Management Authorities,
 - the (only) transnational partner was not approved, but the orphan DP is highly qualified and of special interest to the Managing Authority.

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8. Financial Planning

1) Overall transnational budget

Examples for possible distributions of Joint Activities costs amongst DPs - Reciprocity and Cost sharing principles -

Activity	Allocation rule	Development Partnerships		
		DP A	DP B	DP C
Discrimination study	Reciprocity on equal terms	10	--	--
Training kit		--	10	--
Joint materials		--	--	10
or				
Training module	Reciprocity on differentiated terms 4:5:7	12	--	--
Multimedia product		--	15	--
Conference		--	--	18
Publication		--	--	3
CD-ROM	Cost sharing on equal terms	20	20	20
or				
Comparative Labour Market Study	Cost sharing, on differentiated terms: 30:40:30	15	20	15

- **Principle of Reciprocity:** each DP covers the costs of one of the Joint Activities. These activities can be of equivalent cost (reciprocity on equal terms) or might have different costs (reciprocity on differentiated terms). One DP can be financially responsible for more activities than other DPs.
- **Principle of Cost sharing:** a given activity is paid by all the DPs involved. The total cost of the activity can be equally shared amongst the different DPs (cost sharing on equal terms) or might be shared according to an agreed formula (e.g. 40% for DP B, and 30% for DP A and C) - cost sharing on differentiated terms.

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