



NetWORKing for Inclusion

Preparatory documents

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Part I: About mainstreaming

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INTRODUCTION

This short paper provides an introduction to the concept of mainstreaming as it is understood in the context of the Community Initiative, **EQUAL**.

The term 'mainstreaming' has been in common usage at European Union (EU) and Member State level since the early 1990s. However, despite its familiarity and desirability, for many, its meaning remains ambiguous - a result of its broad definition and the wide range of activities it describes.

This paper is the product of the joint efforts of a sub-group of the **EQUAL** Mainstreaming Working Group. Its aim is to clarify some of the ambiguities regarding mainstreaming, with a view to:

- creating a common understanding of the term to allow for meaningful exchange and discussion within the context of **EQUAL**;
- building on the experiences gained over the course of previous initiatives; and
- establishing a baseline against which it will be possible to understand progress over the life of **EQUAL**.

Chapter 1 gives some basic definitions and examples. We discuss *what* mainstreaming is and how it can be understood and delivered at various levels (local, regional, national, transnational and EU). We also discuss *why* mainstreaming is both a desirable and necessary outcome for Development Partnerships (DPs), the delivery organisations, supported under **EQUAL**. We then identify *who* might be involved in mainstreaming and *who* might be the targets of mainstreaming actions before providing suggestions and guidance on *how* to mainstream and *when* it might be best to do so.

Chapter 2 gives a flavour of mainstreaming in practice. It is based on our understanding of how the programme is being delivered at an early stage across the Member States through discussions with those involved in its implementation, taking account of best practice and successful mainstreaming from the previous Human Resource Community Initiatives, **EMPLOYMENT** and **ADAPT**. It provides an indication of the variety of approaches, levels of engagement and degree of success attained in the past, and describes how **EQUAL** has been designed to address some of the recognised barriers to effective mainstreaming.

The clear aim of **EQUAL** and its constituent DPs across the EU and the candidate countries is to move towards a systematic approach to maximise its impact in combating all forms of inequality and discrimination in the labour market through effective mainstreaming of good practice and policy messages.

We hope this paper proves to be a useful resource for DPs, as well as for policy-makers and others who are key actors in the mainstreaming process. Any comments regarding this paper or mainstreaming in general are welcomed and should be sent to: the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, Community Initiatives (B/4), Tel: + 32 2 295 50 89, Fax: + 32 2 296 97 70, E-mail: empl-equal-info@cec.eu.int

CHAPTER 1 : MAINSTREAMING IN THEORY

1. WHAT IS MAINSTREAMING?

1.1. WHAT DOES MAINSTREAMING MEAN?

'Mainstreaming' is one of the six basic implementing principles of **EQUAL**. The term has been in common usage at EU and Member State level since the early 1990s. It has progressively filtered down to become part of everyday language at local level in every Member State. However, mainstreaming means different things to different people and organisations. This depends on their position vis-a-vis the Community Initiatives, from the local, delivery level through to the European Commission.

So what does mainstreaming mean? The **EQUAL** glossary¹ contains the following working definition of mainstreaming within the programme:

A process which enables activities to impact on policy and practice. This process includes identifying lessons, clarifying the innovative element and approach that produced the results, their dissemination, validation and transfer. More specifically, mainstreaming also defines the phase of transfer and the way in which other actors take account of the results, approaches and key elements elaborated by one or more Development Partnerships.²

Mainstreaming is about influencing change in policy and practice. In the context of **EQUAL**, it is about influencing change that will result in the reduction of all forms of labour-market discrimination and inequality – the focus of its mainstreaming impact.³ Mainstreaming is then about successfully integrating tried and tested innovative outcomes into the core of local, regional, national and European employment and human resource development policies and practices. The ultimate goal is to achieve a labour market that is open to all.

1.2. HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL MAINSTREAMING

Mainstreaming may take place in a variety of ways. Where this is at 'peer' level, as the above definition suggests, this is referred to as '**horizontal mainstreaming**'. The **EQUAL** glossary defines horizontal mainstreaming as:

The transfer of lessons learnt to similar organisations. The transfer can be specific (e.g. a particular tool) or broad (e.g. contributing to a change of practice).

Under **EQUAL**, this type of mainstreaming (transfer of innovation) is likely to be inter-organisational, given the design of DPs and their role in the programme. It may also move beyond members of individual DPs and impact on related organisations, particularly at local level but not necessarily limited to local transfer. This type or level of mainstreaming is likely to focus on changes in *practices* under the control of local organisations or organisations within a sector. For example, training deliverers in a given sector or geographic area may choose to stagger the

¹ See the **EQUAL** website on "europa.eu.int/comm/equal".

² DPs are the groups of organisations funded to design and implement activities under **EQUAL**.

³ This does not, of course, preclude unplanned or unexpected mainstreaming effects. However, the strategic success of mainstreaming will be mainly judged on the extent to which it achieves *desired* or *planned-for* effects.

starting times of courses to combat the actual and perceived discriminatory effects of uniform and early starts on people with caring responsibilities.

Where mainstreaming takes the form of transfer of innovation from one level of administration/operation to another, it may be referred to as '**vertical mainstreaming**'. The **EQUAL** glossary defines vertical mainstreaming as:

The transfer of lessons learnt and integration of all or part of results into policy and practice at institutional, political, regulatory or administrative level.

Vertical mainstreaming is likely to influence both *practice and policy*, with a premium on influencing policy at the highest level. This is because this type of mainstreaming effect is more likely to result in systematic and general change which tackles fundamental causes of inequality and/or discrimination. For example, innovative DPs may demonstrate the inequalities experienced by ethnic minorities in accessing third-tier education, and the benefits of targeted support for such groups. As a consequence, the government department dealing with education might decide to introduce an enhanced allowance for such students, or introduce a quota system requiring third-tier institutions to take a minimum number of students from a minority ethnic group.

1.3. PUSH AND PULL

Mainstreaming may also be understood in terms of what are referred to as its '*push and pull dimensions*'.

The *push dimension* refers to the efforts of individual DPs and networks to gain recognition for the innovative solutions they have piloted. According to the **EQUAL** glossary, the push dimension is:

a mechanism by which DPs seek to increase the visibility of their results with a view to transferring the latter to other actors.

The *pull dimension* refers to mobilising key actors and decision-makers towards the eventual adoption of innovative practice and policy change. The pull dimension, according to the **EQUAL** glossary is:

a mechanism in which policy and decision-makers or other key actors identify priorities within the experimental activities and follow their progress with a view to using the results.

A given organisation or DP might be required to operate within both dimensions, depending on its composition and the relative positioning of its constituent members or the DP as a whole. This means that a given organisation or DP might be pushing certain lessons and innovations, while at the same time being the target for other, externally generated lessons and innovations.

Member States must systematically organise and develop the push and pull mechanisms for mainstreaming EQUAL results, on the basis of an overall mainstreaming plan (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). In contrast to ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, the push mechanisms will not be linked to individual DPs, but to groups of DPs which are encouraged to validate, synthesise and disseminate their experiences, methodologies and results by networking with their peers. The comparative assessments of these networks will also result in a better understanding of the main factors leading to inequality and discrimination in the relevant thematic field.

1.4. WHAT IS MAINSTREAMED?

Mainstreaming outcomes from DPs are generally related to either *practice* or *policy* (or both):

- *mainstreaming of practice* – occurs when a mainstream agency adopts and reproduces examples of good practice arising from the actions of DPs. The practices adopted may represent all or part of the actions undertaken by a DP.

- *mainstreaming of policy* – occurs when the policy lessons arising from the actions of DPs have a direct influence or impact on mainstream policy-making or policy implementation. This type of mainstreaming outcome is the most difficult to achieve, as it necessarily involves a wide range of actors and more remote levels of decision making. It can occur through the ‘push mechanism’, outlined above, but is greatly facilitated by the ‘pull dimension’ – the active involvement of the policy community with the DPs from whose actions the relevant lessons are drawn.

1.5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND EQUAL

In all its activities, the European Union is committed to eliminating inequalities and to promoting equality between men and women. Gender mainstreaming is now well-established in policy and practice and its concept may have been the first introduction for many to the idea of ‘mainstreaming’. EQUAL, however, aims to tackle all forms of discrimination and inequality, not just those relating to gender. This wider approach applies across all actions, actors and strategies. Those familiar with gender mainstreaming will recognise that, as with all forms of mainstreaming, to succeed, it requires political will, appropriate structures and mechanisms, and adequate resources. These approaches are explored in the following sections, which focus on the mechanics of why, how and when to mainstream, and who should be involved in the process.

2. WHY MAINSTREAM?

Mainstreaming can be complex and difficult to achieve. However, the potential for real benefits are significant:

- **EQUAL** DPs can contribute to improving public policy and practice, based on what actually works and by involving the key stakeholders, including the ultimate target groups ;
- **EQUAL** can help to raise the awareness of decision makers at all levels, and of the public, about potential solutions to common social and economic problems and
- **EQUAL** can provide a suitable way to share and transfer knowledge, expertise and experiences through networking and learning.

EQUAL is, after all, an experimental, innovative programme – a laboratory to develop new ways of tackling discrimination in the labour market. The investment in such an innovative programme can only be justified through the achievement of a positive impact on current policy and practice – i.e. effective mainstreaming. Experimenting with new approaches and products on the one hand (innovation), and institutionalising validated and successful results on the other (mainstreaming), are core and inextricably linked facets of **EQUAL**

3. HOW TO MAINSTREAM?

The process of transferring good practice and policy messages to appropriate audiences in order for mainstreaming to occur is complex. Effective mainstreaming requires the following steps:

- identify the good practice or policy innovation (the ‘message’);
- identify and involve the target audience; and
- use appropriate activities and instruments.

3.1. HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY GOOD PRACTICE?

The term ‘good practice’ implies that practices meet the changing needs of communities, can be replicated into new and diverse contexts and can, and should be, mainstreamed. Given the innovative nature of **EQUAL**, there should also be scope to learn lessons from those approaches that do not work, as well as those that are successful. Three main models for recognising which innovations from DPs can be identified are identified:

- **top-down** – the mainstreaming target audience conducts a comprehensive review of one (or more) DP’s activities and identifies innovative activity by comparing it with existing practice;
- **bottom-up** – the DP itself identifies what it believes to be its innovative approach and markets this to the mainstreaming target audience; and

- **peer review** – the DP’s activity is evaluated by peers (one or more of other DPs, external evaluators, National Support Structure (NSS)), and appropriate policy makers who jointly market the innovation to the target audience.

Each method has advantages and disadvantages. However, peer review ensures co-operation between groups of DPs and their policy audience to provide a strategic focus and an external, evaluative viewpoint. In order to qualify as good practice, **EQUAL** results or products should ideally meet the following six requirements.

i. Innovation

Good practices are innovative – for example, they may be new, creative solutions to common problems of social exclusion, discrimination and inequality in the labour market. In the **EQUAL** framework, the innovation generated by DPs should be assessed in terms of the quality of the single actions carried out, including the methods, tools and processes adopted.

ii. Effectiveness and efficiency

Good practices make a difference – they demonstrate a positive, tangible impact on the living conditions, quality of life and environment of socially disadvantaged individuals, groups or communities.

In the **EQUAL** framework, special attention should be given to assessing the effectiveness of the *strategy adopted* by a given DP in achieving objectives such as employability, skills development, integration and building of networks. It is therefore important to focus on the key concepts underlying the DP’s strategy, the methods and approach adopted, the catalyst for action and change, and the opportunities seized upon to effect action and change.

Under ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, projects were most effective when they were:

- capable of building on previous successful experiences;
- implemented in parallel with other, external projects (cross-fertilisation);
- designed and implemented to meet the specific needs of the intermediate and final target groups, and in collaboration with these target groups; and
- designed and implemented by multi-skilled, multi-disciplinary teams who ensured an integrated approach to solving the complex problems of social exclusion.

Furthermore, **good practices must be efficient**, delivering value for money.

iii. Sustainability

Good practices are sustainable – they should be assessed in terms of their ability to produce lasting benefits for direct beneficiaries and the community at large.

Under ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, projects had sustainable effects when they developed strategies to ensure that the project benefits would continue after EU funding finished (for instance, by signing specific agreements with local authorities to ensure the financial sustainability of newly established co-operatives).

iv. Reproducibility

Good practices have the potential for replication in similar contexts – they serve as a model for generating initiatives and policies elsewhere.

v. Transferability

Good practices have the potential for transfer in different contexts – the successful undertaking or strategy can be adopted, with due adjustments, as a model practice for different problems and in different territorial contexts.

vi. Policy relevance

Good practices address real issues and respond to the needs of policy makers – DP outcomes should be assessed, among other things, in terms of their capacity to contribute to implementing the critical issues of the National Action Plans for Employment and their relevance to the priorities of local, regional and national policy-makers.

Projects that led to the development of good practice under ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT had a strong prior track record in the specific themes and issues being tackled. They were also firmly established in the area where the projects were carried out, and actively involved the target groups, from design to implementation and evaluation of the project.

The Commission has prepared a draft *Good Practice Checklist* which reflects the above criteria. The purpose of this checklist is to provide a basis for selecting good practices developed by **EQUAL** DPs. Further information is given in Chapter 2. Finally, both national and EU-wide evaluations of EQUAL will examine what new policy delivery mechanisms work in which way, and what are critical factors for success and failure.

3.2. HOW DO WE IDENTIFY AND INVOLVE THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

The target audience may be engaged in a variety of ways. Involvement may be *passive*, where the audience receives mainstreaming outputs from DPs and national networks as they become available. This is a relatively simple process for DPs or networks to organise, but there is no guarantee that the audience will find the outcomes timely or relevant.

A more *active* approach can be taken, where the audience is encouraged to contribute to the mainstreaming process, for example by participating in the national networks, helping to shape agendas, observing progress, and influencing the timetable to meet its own needs. This can lead to a greater sense of ownership, which can result in more effective mainstreaming. However, this approach is more resource-intensive for DPs and can be difficult to maintain in the face of shifting policy priorities.

Whatever the level of engagement, a precondition of involving the target audience in the process of mainstreaming is a good knowledge of its *needs* and *ways of working*.

3.2.1. Identifying the target audience's needs

Success in mainstreaming is subject to similar laws of supply and demand as in the commercial sector. If a DP's innovation is to be transferred into the mainstream, it must supply a solution for which there is currently a demand. **EQUAL**'s thematic approach and model of bringing together DPs and policy-makers in National thematic networks (see Chapter 2) are already proving to be valuable for facilitating consultation to establish where demand exists and how it can be met.

This ongoing consultation means that DPs can remain flexible and deliver the mainstreaming outcomes that are needed as demand develops. DPs in **EQUAL** have an advantage over those in previous initiatives, in that they can be more flexible and responsive to developing demand.

3.2.2. Understanding the target audience's ways of working

In order to transfer an innovation, the target audience must understand its value and relevance. In turn, DPs need to understand how the target audience makes decisions, and its timeframe for doing so. Crucial questions about each target organisation for mainstreaming include:

- Who makes the decisions? (e.g. individuals, committees);
- When are decisions made? – i.e. when is demand most acute (e.g. spending reviews, policy consultations); and
- How are decisions made? (e.g. based on 'hard evidence' only, through consultation).

Success in mainstreaming also depends on being able to interest and inspire individuals. Finding a 'champion' for an innovation within the target organisation could give a crucial advantage to the mainstreaming efforts of a DP or group of DPs.

3.3. HOW TO USE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND INSTRUMENTS?

Having identified, understood and involved the target audience, DPs can decide what methods to use to transfer their innovation. Activities and instruments will vary according to the direction of the mainstreaming (horizontal or vertical). However, in all cases activity should be *demand-led* in both content and method. It should also be based on a thorough understanding of the needs of the identified audience.

Activities may include:

- *reporting and disseminating*, through published documents, audio-visual materials, evaluation reports, conferences, events, discussion/focus groups; and
- *demonstrating*, through pilot activity observed directly by the target audience.

Depending on the target audience's needs, the information provided in reports may consist of 'hard', quantitative data (obtained by benchmarking, for example). Or it may be more qualitative and descriptive, dealing with 'soft' outcomes. Importantly, activities and instruments must be tailored to meet the needs of the target audience.

4. WHEN TO MAINSTREAM?

4.1. TIMING MAINSTREAMING TO SUIT THE OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS OF OTHERS

Timing is a crucial element of effective mainstreaming. The policy development process is not linear and it is necessary to understand the funding and decision-making cycles of their target mainstreaming audience. It is unlikely that these will coincide directly with the delivery programme of a DP. To maximise current or future policy relevance, DPs should ask themselves two questions:

- When will important products be ready? Mainstreaming of specific actions should be linked to the dates when those products will be available; and
- When would policy-makers find it most useful to know about our products and results?

Practically, DPs should make good use of landmark occasions to disseminate essential information. They should also seek to make available their results in advance of debates or the delivery of strategic reports. They should have a presence at key conferences, exhibitions and events, bearing in mind that large events are planned many months in advance. If a DP is to exhibit or present its products and practices, it should start negotiating its invitation as soon as it knows when the products will be available.

4.2. STARTING EARLY: MAINSTREAMING AS AN ONGOING PROCESS

For the reasons set out above, mainstreaming must be seen as an ongoing process. Change is more likely to be successful when implemented over time. If DPs wait until their work is completed before informing policy-makers, their opportunities to influence may be lost, their innovation may be less relevant than when first planned and policy-makers may be less inclined to trust their outcomes if introduced to them at a late stage. Mainstreaming should be taken into account from the very beginning and implemented on an ongoing basis to take advantage of relevant mainstreaming opportunities as and when they occur.

From strategy inception, DPs should pay attention to the potential for mainstreaming. Where possible, policy-makers, and all other relevant actors, should be involved from the *planning phase* onwards. Involving them in the planning and design phase contributes to ensuring a closer link between their needs and a DP's planned products, and helps to build relationships and assist policy makers in understanding and appreciating the context in which innovation is being developed. A plan and timetable for mainstreaming should form a key part of the DPs work-plan, and establish an ongoing process for feeding results to the target mainstreaming audience.

In the *implementation phase*, the involvement of decision-makers can help to ensure the embedding of good practice and enhance the effectiveness of the final products. This will promote wider understanding of, and trust in, the DPs' models.

5. WHO IS INVOLVED IN MAINSTREAMING?

Effective mainstreaming requires a wide range of actors. It is essential that the relevant decision-makers are reached if policy and practice are to be influenced. Mainstreaming can, and should, take place both horizontally and vertically, therefore the Development Partnership and the individual organisations it unites will form the first audience for mainstreaming. At a wider level, the horizontal networks the delivery partners work within will form a further audience at the local and regional level. For vertical mainstreaming to take place, DPs need to reach out to the wider policy making community at National or EU level. Again, this may be achieved through the wider Development Partnership, or through specific and targeted dissemination and mainstream strategies to attract and engage with those the **EQUAL** programme seeks to influence.

More details about the key actors involved in mainstreaming and their roles are discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 2 : MAINSTREAMING IN PRACTICE

This Chapter elaborates on the mainstreaming philosophy underpinning **EQUAL** and outlines the lessons learnt from previous programmes. It also summarises the approach to mainstreaming at national level and explains the manner in which European networks are being organised to improve the mainstreaming potential of the results of **EQUAL**.

1. **EQUAL AND MAINSTREAMING LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS PROGRAMMES**

1.1. **EQUAL'S MAINSTREAMING PHILOSOPHY**

EQUAL is designed to support the development of innovative solutions to the delivery of policy priorities of Member States, as set out in their National Action Plan for Employment. The basic building blocks of **EQUAL** include:

- a strong policy focus, with national plans addressing the themes of the EES and identifying policy priorities where **EQUAL** DPs could develop innovative solutions;
- a requirement to work across these themes at national and EU levels to enable effective identification of good practice both within and among Member States, and to develop a dissemination strategy to ensure that the outcomes of **EQUAL** are fully exploited; and
- activities to be taken forward by a strategic partnership (the DP) which must draw together key actors (e.g. public authorities, NGOs, the business sector and social partners) to work together to develop an integrated approach to multidimensional problems.

The membership and structure of DPs will enable more effective dialogue between practitioners and the policy level.

1.2. **MAINSTREAMING LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS PROGRAMMES**

The structure of **EQUAL** takes account of the evaluation of mainstreaming under previous programmes such as ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT. The conclusions of national and EU-wide evaluations suggest that the key factors that facilitated effective mainstreaming were:

- a clear mainstreaming strategy;
- a strong interest in and awareness of the projects' outcomes at national level, so that policy-makers wanted to use the results; and
- effective support structures for those developing projects. The NSS in particular has a fundamental role to play as an interface between projects and the policy level (e.g. by exchanging information and experience, translating project results into policy tools, establishing networks and supporting them, enabling the active involvement of key actors and policy-makers).

Barriers to mainstreaming identified through evaluation included:

- lack of clear mainstreaming strategy and procedures;
- little access by projects to policy-makers;
- projects not always knowing whether results had been acted on; and
- no involvement of project promoters in mainstreaming.

2. **MAINSTREAMING AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

Managing Authorities in each Member State are responsible for networking, dissemination and mainstreaming and specific funding is identified in programming documents for these purposes. This strategic work needs to be organised in a way that enables a clear interface between

practitioners and those responsible for policy formation supported by mechanisms to allow for effective information exchange.

2.1. NATIONAL MAINSTREAMING PLANS

As mainstreaming is so important, and taking into account the lessons of previous programmes, each Member State is required to establish a mainstreaming strategy under EQUAL. Given the range of actors with a part to play in the mainstreaming process, and the different mechanisms and structures in place, it is important to set down this strategy in a mainstreaming plan. The plan should describe the different stages of the mainstreaming process, the key actors, their tasks, how they fit together, and the monitoring and evaluation of mainstreaming activities.

The mainstreaming strategies and plans that have been established by Member States are examined below, looking at three building blocks of the national strategies as follows:

- the national thematic networks and their role in horizontal and vertical mainstreaming (Section 2.2.),
- key actors involved in mainstreaming (Section 2.3.), ; and
- description of the mainstreaming tools (Section 2.4.), .

As mainstreaming is a dynamic process and many mainstreaming plans are still 'under construction', the picture will change over time.

2.2. THE NATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS AND MAINSTREAMING

2.2.1. National Thematic Networks

The National Thematic Networks constitute an important mainstreaming forum. All Member States are in the process of establishing such networks (also called Thematic Networking Groups, mainstreaming fora, thematic clusters, mainstreaming committees). Although their role and form may differ slightly across Member States, the primary objective of these networks is to allow DPs to work together to identify and assess good practice. In many cases policy-makers are involved, enabling a clear bridge to be made between policy and practitioners. The networks are developing dissemination strategies to enable horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. Network activities include:

- establishing a forum to enable learning from other DPs;
- establishing a clear link between policy development and **EQUAL** activities as soon as possible (i.e. during the implementation phase);
- involving non-programme players (e.g. potential users, public bodies);
- analysing problems of discrimination in the labour market;
- developing assessment and benchmarking tools for good practice;
- developing dissemination strategies across the themes selected; and
- establishing a clear link between national and European mainstreaming activities (through DPs' participation in European seminars and their feedback to the National Thematic Network).

Member States have selected *themes* for the networks to focus on. These themes can be one or more of the nine **EQUAL** themes. Great Britain, for instance, has established networks for eight **EQUAL** themes. Northern Ireland has established networks for the two pillars it is addressing (Employability and Equal Opportunities). A focus on particular target groups is also possible. For example, Northern Ireland is also setting up networks concentrating on people with disabilities and long-term unemployed people. Other networks are focusing on horizontal themes not linked to a specific **EQUAL** theme but focusing on a particular **EQUAL** principle or topic. Portugal, for instance, has identified seven areas, including empowerment and working in partnership.

The success of these networks depends on the input of DPs and the **EQUAL** guidelines require the participation of DPs in this respect.. In several Member States, the quality of the mainstreaming plan put forward by DP's constitutes an important selection criterion.

Thematic networks are not necessarily restricted to **EQUAL** DPs. In Finland, in order to develop critical mass with a view to achieving a policy impact, thematic networks are open to significant

ESF projects from other programmes as well as to NGOs, training institutions and other experts. Most Member States have opened their networks to non-programme players. In French-speaking Belgium, thematic networks (mainstreaming committees) are open to all social partners, policy-makers and public services, in order to integrate good practices into policy.

2.2.2. Horizontal mainstreaming

Several Member States consider that the thematic networks offer important potential for horizontal mainstreaming. Since the networks constitute meeting places for DPs, good practice can more easily be mainstreamed at horizontal level. In Finland, for instance, the thematic network is expected to enable dissemination of good practice and validated results at horizontal level, through publications, conferences and internet presentations.

In Dutch-speaking Belgium, DPs will be able to exchange their practices and results in 'thematic clusters'. Each cluster will have a cluster manager to monitor the quality of the content, establish a common strategy for mainstreaming, and involve all relevant actors.

Italy would assign the tasks of horizontal and vertical mainstreaming to different bodies. Working groups or fora would be in charge of horizontal mainstreaming, whereas mainstreaming committees would promote vertical mainstreaming (see below). Each working group established for the purpose of horizontal mainstreaming would have to be co-ordinated by a DP. The DP would be responsible, among other things, for disseminating the results at horizontal level. All DPs would be required to participate in the working groups.

2.2.3. Vertical mainstreaming

The National Thematic Networks are a primary and important forum for enabling vertical mainstreaming. In Great Britain, Thematic Networking Groups have been established for each **EQUAL** theme. In addition to DPs, these networks include representatives of the equality commissions, government departments, social partners and the regional administration. TNGs must ensure that **EQUAL** focuses on policy priorities and takes account of emerging findings and changes in policy and/or the labour market. Furthermore, the TNGs played a significant role in the selection process for DPs. Their strategic overview within specific themes enabled recommendations to be made to individual DPs regarding collaboration with other DPs, joint working in key areas, and influencing work programmes to produce outcomes to better meet the needs of the policy community.

As noted above, Italy would establish mainstreaming committees to promote vertical mainstreaming. Each is open to representatives of selected DPs, the Commission, parliamentary committees, social partners, regional authorities and national experts. In Sweden, there is a direct link between the thematic networks and the Monitoring Committee, which is in turn linked to the civil servants responsible for the NAP.

2.3. KEY ACTORS

2.3.1. Development Partnerships

Under ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, effective mainstreaming resulted from appropriate *partnerships* of stakeholder organisations working to deliver shared objectives and goals. Through partnership, new forms of co-operation and networking (essential first steps to mainstreaming) were tested, including both the private and public sectors.

EQUAL is being delivered through the model of *Development Partnerships*, and again the structure and composition will determine to a large extent the quality and effectiveness of mainstreaming. DPs are involving within their partnerships, those organisations and individuals who have a central role to play within the policy field in which the partnership operates. It is important that partners who can take part in vertical mainstreaming *as well as* those who can have a role in horizontal mainstreaming are involved. Whilst DP models and the composition of partnerships vary across and within the Member States, the following example serves as illustration:

A DP is focusing on the problem of the segmented labour market. As a solution to this segmentation, the common goal is to produce gender-neutral guidance on young people's choice of work and further education. Who should be involved to ensure that the DP creates good results and that there is successful mainstreaming of these results? Our example DP consists of partners 1 to 7:

Partner 1 is an independent advisory body on equal opportunities. This partner participates in many political committees and boards, and has good relations with the national press.

Partner 2 is a university research unit; the DP's results will be used as a basis for further research into what influences young people's choice of education and work.

Partner 3 is an educational institution that provides training in guidance. This partner is also responsible for national training in guidance – any changes in the training model would impact on delivery nationwide. The partner is also part of a broader network of educational institutions, which would permit horizontal mainstreaming.

Partner 4 is a pupils' council, representing young people who are given advice and guidance on what and how to choose.

Partner 5 is a students' representative council, representing the university students who are receiving guidance training in an innovative way as a result of the DP. Partners 4 and 5 are able to push for 'bottom-up' change.

Partners 6 and 7 represent the social partners. These partners participate in numerous political bodies and are in close contact with many workplaces throughout the country.

This structure creates the potential for successful mainstreaming - the DP has access to a wide range of relevant mainstreaming *target groups*, including national policy-makers, educational institutions, networks and user groups, who will play a key role in steering the development of and identifying the relevance of good practice. Importantly, the DP is involving its target audience in its design and delivery - essential if both push and pull mainstreaming is to take place. In reality many other players will have a role to perform, at different levels, to ensure effective mainstreaming. Some of these are outlined below.

2.3.2. Local / regional / sectoral levels

It is important that **EQUAL** can make an impact at the appropriate level. Although the potential impact on policy priorities in the National Action Plans for Employment has been referred to, local and regional authorities are often responsible for many elements of employment policy. Where responsibilities are not devolved, local and regional authorities still have a key role to play in delivery.

In some of the largest Member States, regional or sectoral networks have been established in addition to National Thematic Networks. In Italy, the regional authorities and provinces will play a decisive role in co-ordinating and promoting mainstreaming actions both at horizontal level (by setting up round tables and/or working groups) and at vertical level (by introducing successfully tested innovations into regional-level programmes).

In Germany, the federal state and the regional Länder will establish partnerships between the Land authorities and the DPs active in each Land, in order to foster integration of **EQUAL** results into regional policy. This will take place in close consultation with the National Thematic Networks.

2.3.3. National Support Structures

The ADAPT final evaluation report indicated that National Support Structures and other national implementation structures provide crucial links between projects and the national (and, for that matter, European) policy level. The NSS is in a central position to actively further a 'pull' strategy of mainstreaming.

In the context of **EQUAL**, National Support Structures also have a key role to play in the mainstreaming process. In general, they are facilitating the work of National Thematic Networks and will assist with mainstreaming successful innovations into social and employment policies.

In Portugal, the NSS is to define the mainstreaming strategy and draft a detailed mainstreaming plan. The plan will provide for:

- establishment of a thematic team within the NSS to help to identify and disseminate good practice;
- organisation of dissemination events such as open days, during which key actors (e.g. policy-makers) can visit DPs';
- identification of the key criteria for successful transfer of best practice to similar organisations; and
- development of larger networks involving DPs as well as 'users' (organisations that might incorporate the products developed by DPs).

In French-speaking Belgium, the NSS will, among other things, organise seminars, animate the thematic networks, draft thematic reports and ensure integration of the results into the NAP.

The Greek NSS (a separate unit in the Ministry of Labour, called 'Support for DPs, Transnationality, Networking and Mainstreaming') is identifying the themes for the thematic networks and supporting the establishment of these networks, to include DPs, social partners, national authorities and all other interested parties.

In Italy, the NSS will assist both institutional actors in implementing the mainstreaming strategy and DPs in transferring their best practices into the policy field. It will also set up and manage thematic animation fora via the web.

2.3.4. Monitoring Committees

Monitoring Committees supervise the implementation of **EQUAL**. They must also monitor the implementation of mainstreaming plans and processes.

2.3.5. Other players

Vertical mainstreaming requires the involvement of players such as policy-makers, public authorities and social partners. It also requires regular contact with officials and co-ordinators dealing with other national or European programmes which might share common objectives with **EQUAL**. As indicated above, most Member States have therefore opened their National Thematic Networks to enable these players to participate.

2.4. MAINSTREAMING TOOLS

2.4.1. Tools for identifying good practice

In the Member States

For many Member States, identification of good practice is an ongoing process. Criteria and tools to validate good practice will be developed throughout the life of **EQUAL**.

The **EQUAL** guidelines indicate that DPs must establish a 'mechanism for *ongoing assessment* including the presentation of data and information on the DP and the analysis of results'. This obligation for self-assessment is a management tool which allows DPs to monitor the results of their work. It is a first and necessary step for allowing DPs to feed their results into the National

Thematic Networks. Following DPs' input, the thematic networks will develop mechanisms to determine which results qualify as good practices. The networks are thus not a mainstreaming tool as such, but a forum for developing mainstreaming tools.

The Commission's EQUAL Common Database and good practice checklist

To assist Member States in identifying good practice, the Commission has established a database and a good practice checklist. The *EQUAL Common Database* (ECDB) contains a detailed overview of all **EQUAL** DPs. It is a purely descriptive source of information and indicates objectives, activities, partners and transnational activities for each DP.

The Commission has also developed a *good practice checklist* which may help Member States and their networks to identify good practice developed by DPs (see Annex 1). The checklist can be used in addition to specific national instruments.

The checklist will be used by European Thematic Groups (ETGs) (see Section 3) as a starting point to assess the examples of good practice provided by Member States. It may be adapted by each thematic group, taking into account the specificity of the themes covered.

In searching for good practice, the checklist (which reflects the criteria set out in Chapter 1) poses three types of questions:

- *What has been achieved?* – what are the DP's results and which innovations have been achieved?
- *How has it been achieved?* – have the activities been carried out in a real partnership? Has the DP managed to apply the empowerment principle in practice? Has the transnational co-operation contributed to the DP's results?
- *Can the results be applied outside the DP?* – how has the DP organised mainstreaming? Is it possible to apply the DP's products or practices in other regions, sectors, countries (reproducibility and transferability)?

2.4.2. Tools for disseminating results

A wide variety of tools can be used to disseminate results, including the following:

- advisory groups;
- groups of product users;
- a local/regional/national network;
- discussion opportunities (workshops, seminars);
- written materials (reports, articles in specialised press, newsletters, press releases, folders of information);
- audio-visual materials (radio, television, web-sites); and
- public events (fairs, exhibitions).

3. MAINSTREAMING AT EUROPEAN LEVEL: STRUCTURES AND METHODS

Mainstreaming must take place at all levels of policy-making. In practice, the work to be carried out at European level will seek to identify good practice across the EU, engaging a wide range of players to ensure that **EQUAL** is able to inform and be informed by wider policy developments. This will create a robust basis upon which the programme's outcomes can be disseminated effectively.

The **EQUAL** guidelines propose three types of action to support the process of creating an impact at European level:

- organisation of thematic reviews which cluster the DPs for each of the **EQUAL** themes;
- periodic assessment of the value added by **EQUAL** in relation to the National Action Plans for Employment; and
- discussion fora at European level.

The key mechanism for enabling good practice to be shared across the EU – European Thematic Groups – is examined below.

3.1. EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

3.1.1. Objectives and role

The primary objectives of European Thematic Groups are to:

- identify good practice across each of the **EQUAL** themes;
- consider how it compares with non-**EQUAL** activity which is being funded;
- identify how it fits with emerging EU policy; and
- develop an effective dissemination strategy to ensure that the wider audience is aware of and can act on the lessons from **EQUAL**.

European Thematic Groups will also help to ensure that those involved in **EQUAL** are aware of changes in European policy, and will raise awareness of relevant EU-level work. This should help Member States and DPs to identify opportunities for greater impact at EU level.

European Thematic Groups need to take account of the wider context, but it is essential that:

- their work remains informed by the practical work being taken forward by DPs;
- Member States have a role to play in validating good practice before any decisions are taken at European level; and
- the work of ETGs is well co-ordinated.

3.1.2. Co-ordination of ETGs

A mainstreaming group has been established which draws together representatives of those responsible for managing and implementing **EQUAL** in each Member State. This group is responsible for working with the Commission to develop the framework in which all ETGs will operate. Key initial tasks for the mainstreaming group include:

- finalising the good practice screening fiche to be used by all ETGs; and
- helping to develop an effective communications strategy, and systems for ETGs to report back on progress

3.1.3. Membership and responsibilities

A core group has already been established and will be responsible for developing the work programme for each ETG. Particular responsibilities are as follows.

Member States will take lead responsibility for each ETG. The decision on lead responsibility has been informed by the Member State's national policy priorities, its expertise and the resources it is prepared to allocate to this work. As such, Member States will be expected to set the agenda for the work of ETGs, and to chair events or meetings.

External contractors will provide technical expertise to facilitate the work of ETGs. This could include preparing technical documents, facilitating events and developing an effective communications strategy.

A member of staff within the **EQUAL team of the Commission** will be responsible for ensuring that the work programme is developed and delivered, and that it is in line with any guidance produced by the mainstreaming group. This person will manage the external contract, and will need to act as a link between ETGs and other policy teams within the Commission. This is to ensure that the policy teams are kept informed of developments, and that the **EQUAL** team has a clear idea of how the work of other policy teams may impact on the work of **EQUAL**.

Representatives of relevant teams within the Commission will be involved in the core group if required. This will vary across the themes.

It is essential that *representatives of the National Thematic Networks* are also involved in the European work. Member States will be expected to identify an individual to take part in EU-level work. This person could be drawn from those managing **EQUAL**, the NSS or a DP, or could be a policy representative. National delegates will act as intermediaries between the national and European networks to ensure regular information flows between both levels. They should inform

the European discussions with national experiences and expectations, and report back to their national networks on European priorities and innovative aspects developed in other Member States.

Over time, more *DPs* will be involved in European thematic work as Member States identify good practice.

3.2. STARTING POINT: THE BARCELONA CONFERENCE

The Barcelona Conference in May 2002 will be the starting point for the work of the European Thematic Groups.

To allow ETGs to launch their mainstreaming activities, the Barcelona Conference will try to give an answer to the following questions, which will be addressed in the discussion panel of 16 May:

- How do we make an impact on policy and practice? Who must be involved? How do we engage them?
- What is the mainstreaming role of *DPs* and what type/membership of *DPs* maximise mainstreaming? (e.g. potential users of good practices, or relevant mainstreaming actors in the partnerships)
- What is a good practice? How do we transfer good practice to new contexts?
- How do we maximise the impact of the thematic networks at national and EU level?

After the discussion panel, five workshops (one for each pillar and one for the asylum seekers theme) will identify sub-themes and other issues of most importance to the development of ETGs. Participants will be asked to:

- identify clusters of activity and key priorities for each theme;
- clarify whether work will be organised on the basis of theme or pillar;
- clarify how best to address links between different European Thematic Groups; and
- given the focus on national policy priorities and the variations in labour markets and institutional frameworks, do we have enough commonality to share good practice?

Following on from Barcelona, the Commission will work with lead Member States to develop a clear plan for European Thematic Groups. In particular, further thoughts should be given to the following issues:

- Should the good practice checklist be adapted to each pillar or even theme?
- Who needs to be involved in ETGs? How is it best to work with existing EU networks with expertise to offer? How and when will *DPs* get involved?
- Who needs to be kept informed of the work of ETGs? How is this best done? What are the right tools for sharing information and good practice?
- How do we retain thematic focus and ensure that good practice is not reduced to generalisations?

4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key challenges for **EQUAL** include:

- seeking to ensure that activities and strategies take account of the outside world, rather than developing new approaches in a vacuum; and
- dealing with the relativity of innovation, given the complex variations in employment policy and implementation systems within the EU.

However, **EQUAL** also provides opportunities to develop:

- practical tools to enable easier assessment of good practice across Member States;
- mechanisms to enable effective transfer from pilot actions to mainstream policy and practice, thereby increasing the chance of mainstreaming; and
- effective communication tools to help practitioners to have an impact on policy development.

In developing the programme, it is essential that EU-level work retains a close relationship with the practical work being taken forward by *DPs*. Member States must also have a clear role in

identifying what they consider to be the most effective processes and products for their particular circumstances.

Finally, perhaps the most important function of the European Thematic Groups is to ensure effective communication and cross fertilisation within and across themes, between Member States and between the Member States and the European Commission. It is through the effective communication of ideas, practices and lessons that EQUAL will ultimately achieve its most important strategic goal, mainstreaming.

ANNEX 1 : GOOD PRACTICE CHECKLIST

The purpose of this checklist is to provide a basis for the selection of good practice under the EQUAL initiative. It will be used by the European Thematic Groups to assess the examples of good practice provided by the Member States.

The checklist provided here is just a basic model. It should then be adapted by each ET Group. In each category, the questions should be modified, where necessary, and new questions with specific relevance for the theme could be added.

The Good Practice checklist could also be used by Member States and their networks in their search for good practice on a national level. It can be used in addition to specific national instruments developed.

The information needed to make the assessment should be found in the EQUAL Common Database. Therefore it is necessary to ensure a high quality of the data transferred by each Member State. The Commission will work with the Member States to harmonise the nature and quantity of input of data.

To find good practice there are three types of questions:

What has been achieved?

The first area of assessment relates to the results of the Development Partnership and the innovation achieved. The aim of the EQUAL Community Initiative is to find new ways to tackle discrimination and inequalities on the labour market. The appraisal of the results should therefore be made with a particular emphasis on the innovative aspects. Depending on when the assessment is made, interim results can be used.

How has it been achieved?

Here an assessment is made on the way the Development partnership has achieved its results. Apart from Innovation there are a few other principles which are central to the implementation of EQUAL. Here we try to find out if the activities been carried out in a real Partnership, if the DP has managed to apply the Empowerment principle in practice, and if the Transnational co-operation has contributed to the results of the DP.

Can the results be applied outside the DP?

This section on mainstreaming and transferability deals firstly with what already has been done to disseminate the results of the DP and how the mainstreaming has been organised at the level of the DP. The second part concerns the reproducibility and transferability of the results. Is it possible to apply the products or practices of the DP in other regions, sectors, countries?

1. WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

RESULTS:

- To which extent were the aims achieved, with an emphasis on the innovative aspects?
- Quantitative and qualitative effects?
- At which level has there been an impact? (local, regional, national, transnational)
- Are the results sustainable?
- Have the results been achieved in a cost- effective manner?

INNOVATION:

- Does the project meet any or all of the following criteria?
 - new actions in the territory or sector
 - project content innovative
 - project methodologies (design, management, evaluation, etc) innovative
- In which way does the innovation relate to the national priorities?

2. HOW HAS IT BEEN ACHIEVED?

PARTNERSHIP:

- Are all relevant actors within the territory or sector (public authorities, social partners, training providers, NGOs, third sector, ...) involved?
- Are they clearly related to the problem to be tackled?
- Do they have clearly defined tasks?
- Does the organisation assure an adequate co-ordination of the partners so that the DP works effectively and efforts and resources are not duplicated?

EMPOWERMENT:

- Have all partners been involved at every stage of the project (design, implementation, follow-up, evaluation)?
- Do the internal mechanisms of decision making guarantee the active participation of every partner in every stage?
- Are there specific measures which allow the direct involvement of beneficiaries (or their representatives) in the decision-making process?

TRANSNATIONALITY:

- Did the DPs involved in the transnational partnership agree from the beginning a detailed program (joint actions, expected results, possible products, etc.) and an operational mode?
- Are the objectives and priorities of the transnational co-operation totally consistent with those of the national project?
- Are the mechanisms of co-operation (organisation, decision making, communication between transnational partners, task sharing, ...) adequate?
- Are the resources (financial, human, technical) assigned to the transnational co-operation sufficient and adequate?
- Is there an adequate monitoring and evaluation system for the transnational actions?
- Do the transnational actions add value to all participants?

3. CAN THE RESULTS BE APPLIED OUTSIDE THE DP?

MAINSTREAMING

- Was there in place, from the beginning, a detailed strategy (calendar, dissemination and communications plan, target groups, general awareness raising, etc.) for mainstreaming good practice?
- Were all relevant policy and decision makers (regional and local level) identified and appropriately contacted to communicate their good practice?
- Have all participants from DP partners committed themselves to mainstream, where applicable, the relevant good practices into the policies of their own organisation?

REPRODUCIBILITY

- Can the concept be reproduced in similar circumstances, problems and territorial contexts?

TRANSFERABILITY

- Can the main characteristics of the concept be transferred to a different problem and territorial context?
- Transfer requirements (products, agents, methodologies, culture,....)
- Products which facilitate the transfer (description of the construction of successful practices, Factors and critical criteria for the transfer, methodological guide for the transfer of innovation, etc)

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INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC REPORTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is intended to provide background information for the thematic workshops at the EQUAL conference in Barcelona (16-17 May, 2002), to underpin and stimulate discussion on priorities for the European Thematic Groups (ETG) that will be launched to further develop work on the different themes.

The document is divided into 9 reports, covering each one of the EQUAL themes, which present an initial analysis of priorities and planned activities of the EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) approved under Action 1, and offer a first approach to identifying possible thematic options for the work of the European networks.

The following 9 reports have been prepared by different experts under contract with the Commission (IFAPLAN-Europas has covered employability and equal opportunities, AEIDL (Association Européenne pour l'Information sur le Développement Local) has dealt with entrepreneurship, and GHK Consulting Ltd has considered adaptability and asylum seekers). The Commission has ensured the co-ordination between these consultants with a view to harmonise the content of the reports; the reader might however still find some difference in the treatment of the thematic analyses.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The thematic analyses are mainly based on information available from the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB). It should be noted that the data contained in the ECDB reflects the intentions of the DPs at the stage when they submitted their applications (Action 1), which have developed since then. Action 1 of EQUAL precisely provides the DPs with time to develop the concrete details of their projects and to accommodate the interests of their transnational partners. Both the quality and quantity of the data vary considerably between individual Member States and DPs, and improvements are required to enable more thorough analyses in the future. The discussions at the workshops in Barcelona should also help to provide further evidence of the developments that have taken place. The outcomes of this initial analysis will then have to be reviewed, when updated and more detailed information is available on the actual work of the DPs within the framework of Action 2.

The transversal review includes DPs selected by Member States as well as by the Czech Republic, which is funding EQUAL-type projects under the PHARE programme. Other Candidate countries will join in due course, Hungary in particular, but information on their partnerships is not included in the database yet. To simplify matters, the use of the term "Member States" in this document includes the Czech Republic.

The methodological approach involved:

- a grouping of DP priorities for action under the specific objectives and activities set out by each individual Member State in its Community Initiative Programme (CIP) which are summarised in Annex 3 of the EQUAL Guide for Transnationality.
- a transversal review, across all Member States and the Czech Republic, of common issues and priorities that emerge from the work plans of the DPs.

The results can help identifying thematic areas for the work of the ETGs that relate to specific priorities of different Member States.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE THEMATIC REPORTS

The following thematic reports are organised around three points:

- An outline of the policy context, with a view to identify policy gaps that EQUAL innovative practice might fill and to consider how EQUAL could best impact on wider policy;
- An analysis of the work plans of the Development Partnerships approved under Action 1, and clustering around the issues addressed and the activities proposed by the DPs;
- The identification of mainstream policy targets and proposals for future thematic work at EU level; as well a set of questions or hypotheses that could be discussed in the thematic workshops.

4. MAINSTREAMING VEHICLES AND MECHANISMS

The central aim of EQUAL is to pilot innovative solutions to employment problems in order that best practice can be identified and transferred into mainstream policies. EQUAL creates two new vehicles for ensuring that the cycle of innovation-transfer and mainstreaming is effectively completed:

- The Development Partnerships themselves
- Thematic clusters of Development Partnerships and other actors working around particular problems or methodologies.

The latter are designed to help the lessons from pilot initiatives to “snowball” in order to achieve the maximum impact on mainstream policies.

Mainstreaming successful models and best practice in EQUAL is thus built into the set-up of the programme itself.

- **The composition of the DPs** reveals that the requirement of bringing relevant key actors into the composition of the partnerships has generally been met. It is too early to tell if the impressive lists of political decision-makers, authorities, companies, employers and unions and NGOs will result in feasible and pro-active mainstreaming concepts.
- So far, only a few DPs refer to explicit **national mainstreaming strategies**. When mentioning mainstreaming activities in their work plans, the vast majority of the DPs refer to different forms of disseminating information, via publications, web sites, and the organisation of conferences, forums, workshops, etc. It is therefore important to repeat that the national Managing Authorities now have the responsibility to organise networking, dissemination and mainstreaming. They will in particular establish thematic networks to help the DPs identify, assess, and test the multiplier potential of their innovations, and to decide collectively which good practices should be disseminated widely or how they should be adapted to different contexts.
- At EU level, **European Thematic Groups** will be set up, which will ensure that new methods of combating discrimination and inequalities are disseminated, reproduced or transferred from one country to another, and contribute to the development of the European and national employment and social inclusion policies.

THEME 1A: EMPLOYABILITY - (RE-)INTEGRATION TO THE LABOUR MARKET

“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.”

1. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The initial definition of Theme A appears to be too broad to provide a differentiated picture of the priorities and activities of the 494 DPs launched under this theme. The methodological approach to preparing a structured overview of the main issues reflected in the planned work of the DPs involved:

- a grouping of DP priorities for action under the specific objectives and activities set out by each individual Member State in its Community Initiative Programme (CIP) which are summarised in Annex 3 of the EQUAL Guide for Transnationality (this does not apply to DPs selected in the Czech Republic).

The results give a first indication of the extent to which the priorities outlined in the summary mentioned above are covered by, or consistent with, the selected DPs, and point to some additional issues and thematic aspects that the DPs propose to address.

- a transversal review, across all Member States, of common issues and priorities that emerge from the work plans of the DPs.

The results can help identify thematic areas for the work of the ETG(s) that relate to specific priorities of (groups of) different Member States.

The analysis was carried out on a sample of 60% of all DPs launched under Theme A.

1.1. CONSISTENCY WITH THEME A AND NATIONAL CIPs

In general, the Development Partnerships selected under Theme A can be clearly allocated to the objectives and proposed activities outlined in the CIPs, as summarised in Annex 3 of the EQUAL Guide for Transnationality. Many, if not the majority, of DPs work on several of these themes and sub-themes. More than half the DPs also intend to focus in their work also on issues that add a new or specific dimension to those outlined in the CIP. These issues cover a wide range. They present new or additional aspects in relation to the priorities of the relevant national CIP rather than new components of Theme A as a whole.

About 20% of the DPs launched under Theme A include activities that could be clearly linked to one or several other main themes of EQUAL, in particular Themes B -Combating racism and xenophobia, AS - Helping the integration of asylum seekers, and D - Strengthening the social economy. Frequent but fewer references are also made to activities related to Themes C - Opening up the business creation process to all, E - Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices, G - Reconciling family and professional life and H - Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation. In discussing options for European level thematic work, the possibility of ETGs involving DPs launched under different thematic areas of EQUAL should therefore be considered.

1.2. COMMON THEMATIC FIELDS

A range of common thematic fields has emerged from the transversal review. Whilst there is a degree of overlap, each of these fields is characterised by a distinct focus. The vast majority of DPs cover several of these fields. A graphical overview is presented at the end of section 1.2..

i. Comprehensive strategies for the integration of people with multiple disadvantages

Ten Member States have stated that their main, or one of their main, priority objective(s) is to tackle the problems of labour market integration of those most at risk. Terms used to describe such people include “the most excluded groups”, “those facing greatest difficulty”, “the most disadvantaged” or “the most vulnerable”. In fact, all except two Member States have launched DPs to address this issue and more than 20 % of all DPs under Theme A are concerned with this priority.

Many DPs focus on a single target group such as people with disabilities, immigrants/ethnic minorities, young people in transition, or ex-offenders. A slight majority however target a wider range of these groups. Common to all DPs engaged in this thematic field is the explicit recognition of the fact that the members of their target groups face multiple disadvantages which combine and mutually reinforce each other in creating barriers to employment. These disadvantages may include lack of qualifications, poor housing conditions, health problems, poverty and lack of self-esteem. A better integration of these groups cannot be achieved through single separate measures. The DPs, therefore, focus on the development of comprehensive strategies integrating different types of action. They all favour an interactive network model that brings together different key agencies such as education/training, placement, social, medical, health and other services in a concerted approach. This approach often involves preventive as well as remedial action and aims to offer **structured individualised pathways to training, work and social inclusion**.

Generally in their work plans, the DPs propose an array of activities and many of these could also be grouped under one, or in most cases several, of the thematic fields outlined below. In many DPs the scope of work reaches beyond the stage of developing these comprehensive strategies and includes a thorough exploration of the conditions that are required for the **sustainable implementation** of holistic approaches at local or regional level. This is well reflected in the emphasis placed by many DPs on cooperation management, in-built evaluation, continuous monitoring and accompanying research.

ii. Modernising existing, or developing new, employment services

Activities planned under this thematic field involve a range of local and regional services, both public and private, which assume different responsibilities in ensuring effective long-term job placement of vulnerable groups. Three out of four Member States and about one quarter of all DPs are engaged in this field, with a clear concentration in Italy and Spain, which together have more than 40% of the relevant DPs.

Two main areas of intended innovation emerge from the analysis of these DPs:

- development of new activities and the training of staff for new roles.
In most cases the aim is to improve the delivery of services tailored to the specific needs of particular target groups such as elderly workers, young people who have dropped out from education and training or people with disabilities and also even more marginalised groups like the homeless, substance abusers or prostitutes. Job mediation and coaching, mentoring and tutoring, individual counselling and case management are some examples of the new services that will be developed and for which staff training will be provided (see also i. above and iii. below);
- networking and extended cooperation between all relevant local/regional agencies.
This includes a more effective use of ICT and the development of common quality criteria and common approaches to quality management.

An almost equal number of DPs focus on either of these two areas and some cover both. A common concern is to make an effective move from passive to active measures. In some cases, the activities will play an important role in the development of regional employment pacts.

iii. Individualised plans for training and social and labour market integration

The concept of individualised integration plans is an important new element of active labour market policy. These plans open up a perspective of coherent sequential steps involving individualised guidance, training, placement and other forms of support for people who face difficulties in employment. Such routes to integration start with a thorough assessment of the individual's capacities and needs. They are also usually based on a mutual agreement between the individual person and the competent guidance, placement or employment service, which engages both parties and outlines their respective responsibilities.

In seven Member States, including four of the "larger" ones, the EQUAL Initiative provides a test bed for piloting or further developing this approach. One out of five Development Partnerships have planned activities in this field and almost half of these are concentrated in France and Spain.

iv. New approaches to the delivery of training

More than 20% of all DPs place particular emphasis on this thematic field. Amongst these, one out of four is located in Germany and the remaining three quarters were launched in 12 other Member States. In most cases, new forms of training are combined with action in other thematic fields (see i. and iii. above, and v. and x. below).

The overarching aim is to create and/or extend training opportunities that are better adapted to specific needs of disadvantaged target groups like elderly workers, people with disabilities, immigrants or people with learning difficulties. In terms of content, the training activities cover a wide range and include the development of basic skills, preparation for new jobs, computer literacy, skills upgrading and citizenship training including language.

The innovative aspects of these activities relate to new forms of delivery rather than to the content or aims of training. Most DPs focus on one, or several, of five main areas of action:

- opening up new opportunities for distance and IT-assisted learning for disadvantaged groups including, in particular, e-learning and the use of "virtual classrooms";
- developing provision with low threshold access for those who are alienated or feel discouraged from learning;
- networking and combining different types of training opportunities, including training pools and consortia, to facilitate the transition of young people from school to training and work and prevent early drop out;
- developing and accrediting modular training;
- enhancing opportunities for informal and non-formal learning.

Other aspects include the use of multi-cultural teaching and learning, approaches to skills upgrading at the workplace, introduction of individual training budgets and quality management of training provision.

Many DPs stress the need for innovation in the organisation and delivery of training in order to develop both the motivation and capacity of disadvantaged groups, and real opportunities, for lifelong learning.

v. Assessment of competences, skills, prior learning and individual needs

Around 10% of all Development Partnerships are planning to introduce new approaches that will enable a more comprehensive assessment of individual capacities and needs in relation to employment and social integration. Almost two thirds of them are located in France, Germany and Italy, but also seven other Member States have launched DPs working in this field.

New aspects and aims that are common to most of these DPs include revealing the hidden potential of people with low or no formal qualifications, identifying and recognising skills and competencies acquired through informal and/or non-formal learning and, in some cases, recognition of qualifications acquired abroad. Many DPs intend to use the results of this assessment as a starting point for building up individual integration plans that address emerging skills gaps and needs. Generally, the assessment will facilitate a more differentiated and fairer appreciation of the capacities of disadvantaged individuals on the part of training providers, placement services and potential employers.

vi. Alternative forms of employment/work and new organisation of work

One out of six Development Partnerships has a specific focus on alternative forms of employment or work experience. Almost 60 % of these DPs are concentrated in France, Spain and Italy, with 40% located in seven other Member States.

Three main types of activity clearly emerge from the analysis. The first concerns the development and effective use of “insertion” or “bridging” companies that provide protected employment and training to prepare people who are difficult to place for their later transition to the open labour market. The second concerns preparation for self-employment. Each of these two areas involves approximately 40% of the DPs grouped under this thematic field, in both cases frequent reference is made to work linked to the preservation of natural resources and urban and neighbourhood renewal. The third type of activity relates to more flexible work contract arrangements, exploring different forms of part time or “task” work and creating new expertise amongst agencies specialising in this activity.

vii. New approaches to guidance, counselling and advice

Many of the common thematic fields described in this working document have a direct bearing on guidance and counselling (see in particular i. – iii. and v. above). Some Development Partnerships place special emphasis on certain aspects that emerge less clearly from the activities of DPs grouped under these other thematic fields. As they are most evenly located across eight Member States, they may indicate a certain degree of general interest in these aspects, despite the fact that they represent only 5% of all DPs.

Two thirds of the DPs concerned focus on the development and use of one-stop shops and clearing houses that can relate people seeking advice to relevant guidance and support networks and thus, help to guide them through the maze of different, and sometimes fragmented, services that may exist in a local or regional context. Other aspects, which in some cases are linked to those mentioned above, include low threshold guidance and information access points for particular target groups and the provision of online information and advice.

viii. Promoting non-discriminatory practices in the work place

Activities grouped under this thematic field mainly involve, target, or are led by, employers. More than one fourth of all DPs, originating from 12 Member States, are promoting these non-discriminatory practices. The majority (60%) are planning awareness raising and sensitisation campaigns to tackle discriminatory preconceptions in enterprises, in many cases combined with action to promote best practice, including through the granting of awards or quality labels. Other activities are aimed at developing and disseminating culturally neutral and fairer recruitment practices (27%), establishing mentoring schemes to facilitate work integration of disadvantaged individuals (15%) and providing advice and support to SMEs on issues of Human Resource Development (8%).

ix. Enhancing the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises to manage diversity

The main thrust of activities subsumed under this thematic field is centred on training and actively involving new types of operators in the process of integrating minority groups. These operators can assume a “bridging” function between these groups and the local community, training organisations and enterprises, advising the staff of local agencies and employers on inter-cultural

or other aspects of diversity management and acting as mediators, change agents, or “advocates”. In many cases, they will be “recruited” from ethnic or other minority backgrounds, and this will also enable them to work as peer counsellors or to provide themselves a positive role model. NGOs and other organisations representing minority groups are important partners in this approach.

About 6 % of all DPs, that are represented in 12 Member States, intend to work on this issue, nearly half of them located in Denmark, Spain and Germany.

x. Preparation for employment in specific sectors/jobs and development of new job profiles

One out of four DPs refers to specific activities related to training and/or preparation for employment in a specific sector or type of job. The results emerging from the analysis show a very diversified picture, but the sectors most frequently quoted are the social economy (23 % of all DPs concerned), Information and Communication Technologies (17%), protection of environment and waste management (10%), and (diversification of) agricultural production (10%).

xi. Specific approaches aimed at particular target groups

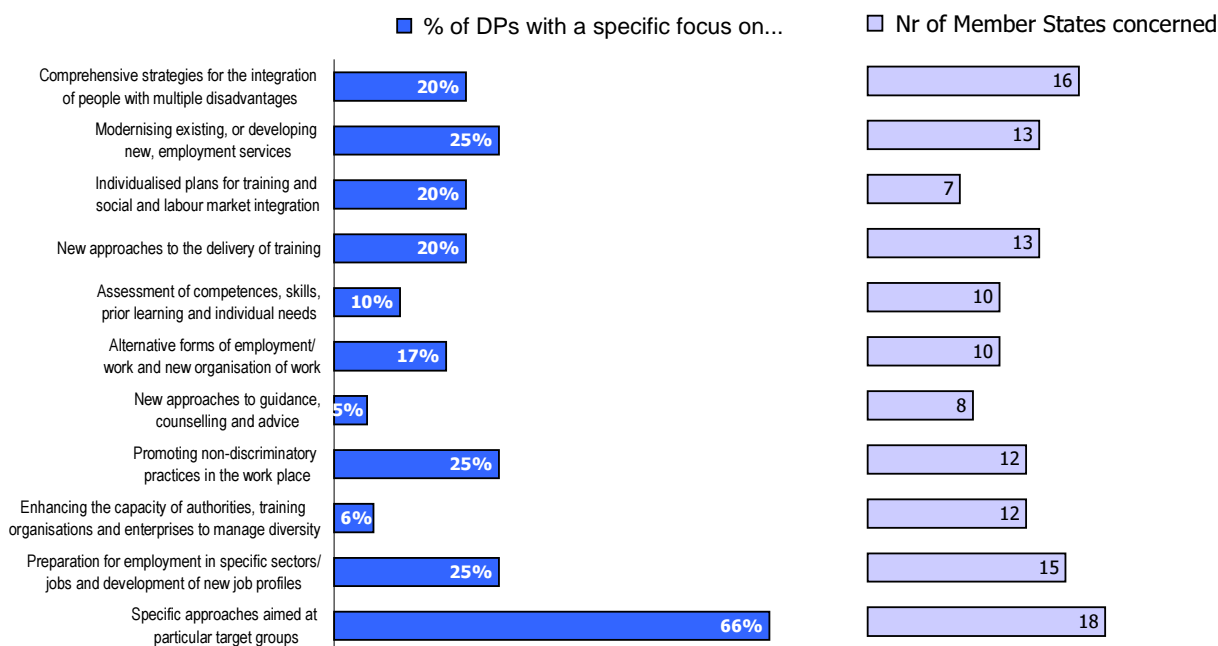
Many Development Partnerships address the needs and integration problems of a wider range of disadvantaged groups. Most of the DPs subsumed under i. above belong to this category. The large majority of all DPs concentrate on fewer, and sometimes single, target groups. In some cases, they explicitly refer to activities specifically adapted to problems that are particular to individual groups such as language training for immigrants or specially adapted equipment and facilities for people with disabilities. In general, however, the lack of sufficiently detailed information from the ECDB does not, at this stage, permit a differentiated overview of the specific approaches that the DPs intend to explore, except in a rather anecdotal way.

Nonetheless, an indication of the target groups that are most frequently addressed by the partnerships launched under Theme A of EQUAL, could be helpful for the planning of future thematic work. These are:

- people with disabilities; immigrants/ethnic minorities (up to 20% of all DPs refer to either of these groups);
- ex-offenders; young people in transition from school to work (about 10%);
- elderly workers; women (7%);
- people marginalised because of poverty or excessive indebtedness; gipsies/travellers (4 -5%).

Other target groups less frequently referred to include lesbian, gay or bi-sexual people, substance abusers, prostitutes and homeless people.

Common Thematic Fields



xii. Transversal issues: mainstreaming, empowerment, gender mainstreaming

Mainstreaming and Empowerment are two of the six building blocks of the EQUAL Initiative, together with the principles of Thematic Approach, Innovation, Partnership and Transnationality. In relation to the principle of Thematic Approach, the Commission's guidelines for EQUAL stipulate that the promotion of equality between women and men shall be integral to all thematic fields and that Member States shall adopt a gender mainstreaming approach in each of these fields.

Because they have direct implications for **all** activities of the Development Partnerships, the issues of mainstreaming, empowerment and gender mainstreaming appear to be particularly relevant for future thematic work. An initial overview of the intentions stated by the DPs with regard to these three transversal themes is presented below.

- Mainstreaming

A special EQUAL Mainstreaming Working Group has been set up at European level, involving the Commission and a number of Member States, to stimulate the active dissemination and transfer of good practice and the development and implementation of strategies to impact on policy priorities, including those set out in the Member States' National Action Plans for Employment (NAPs). This working group will operate in close liaison with the ETG(s). About one quarter of all Development Partnerships launched under Theme A make explicit and relatively detailed references to their intended mainstreaming activities and approaches. In the Czech Republic, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UKgb) this applies to the large majority or almost all DPs. Planned strategies include a clear identification of the key audiences, levels and channels for mainstreaming, transfer of results to other regions or relevant sectors, integration with local or regional pacts for employment, systematic use of the media and the setting up of special management groups/committees for mainstreaming.

Another, equal sized group of DPs refer to the issue of mainstreaming in a general way through statements like "results will be made widely available" or "outcomes may also apply to other sectors".

Almost half the DPs make no reference to mainstreaming at all. However, in some of the “smaller” Member States the activities and outcomes of the work of the DPs are likely to impact on national policy, even if this is not explicitly stated. In other cases, the size and composition of the partnerships in terms of the number of partners or geographical and sectoral coverage will produce a mainstreaming effect.

- Empowerment

More than two thirds of all DPs address the issue of empowerment. The vast majority of them have planned specific activities, including strengthening the target groups’ capacity for self help, active involvement of beneficiaries in the design of the action and participation in its evaluation, empowerment workshops, peer group work, and involvement of advocacy groups and relevant NGOs. Many combine different activities in order to implement a more comprehensive empowerment strategy. A sizable minority of the DPs make a general reference to this issue, without providing further details.

The analysis shows that about one third of all DPs make no reference to empowerment activities. Half of these are located in France and lack of relevant information in the database is one possible explanation for this unusual concentration.

- Gender mainstreaming

Only two out of ten Development Partnerships launched under Theme A refer either generally or specifically to gender mainstreaming. They are located in six Member States, including Germany and Spain where more than half the DPs address this issue. The specific activities that are planned involve gender mainstreaming training for staff of the members of the DPs, the inclusion of positive action in all measures, the use of “Equal Opportunity Centres” or a combination of these and other options.

2. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

Two of the distinct features of the EQUAL Initiative are its focus on developing good practice that can help translate the priorities of the European Employment Strategy (EES) into action at local and regional level, and its in-built commitment to testing new ways for the wider transfer and mainstreaming of successful approaches. Within this framework, EQUAL also forms part of the Union’s wider integrated strategy to combat discrimination and to promote social inclusion. It is therefore intended to promote innovation which can support the implementation and further development of the National Action Plans that are based on the Guidelines of the EES (NAPempl). In addition, it could make a similar contribution with regard to the National Action Plans on social inclusion (NAPincl) and other cooperative action to fight discrimination and exclusion.

Some of the horizontal objectives and specific Guidelines (2002) of the EES appear to be of particular relevance for shaping the future work of the ETG(s) related to Theme A of EQUAL:

- Reaching, by the year 2010, an overall employment rate of 70%, and within this framework an employment rate of more than 60% for women and of 50% amongst older persons aged 55 to 64

This horizontal objective, for which targets were set by the European Council in Lisbon and Stockholm, has already been achieved by a small group of Member States, including Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, in relation to overall and female employment rates. In the majority of Member States, further efforts are required to match the target benchmark.

A comprehensive approach to active ageing policies, as set out in Guideline 3 of the EES, is still underdeveloped in the NAPs of most Member States and the EU average rate of employment of this group remains below 38%. The Council has addressed specific recommendations, drawing on the Commission’s examination of the National Action Plans

(employment) for 2001, to seven Member States. These call for further action enhancing the capacity of older workers to stay longer in the labour market. All of these Member States have launched DPs with specific activities in this thematic field. More recently, the Barcelona European Council has re-stated the importance of such policies for a reinforced employment strategy.

The work of DPs in some of the common thematic fields outlined in section 1.2. is likely to generate examples of good practice which are particularly relevant in this policy context, either because they involve comprehensive approaches to increasing employment or because of their specific target group focus. For ease of reading, these thematic fields are simply indicated by their contextual reference number, i.e. the sub-sections i.-iii., vi. and some aspects are subsumed under xi. , especially elderly workers.

- Coherent and comprehensive strategies for Lifelong Learning

This priority is also included in the horizontal objectives of the EES, underpinned by specific Guidelines, and is consistent with the interrelated objectives of the Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. Most NAPs give a high profile to the wide range of issues involved, often making clear links to the quality of labour supply and social inclusion concerns. Guidelines 4 and 5 refer directly to equipping young people with basic skills relevant to the labour market, reducing youth and adult illiteracy and drop-out from education/training, facilitating access of adults to lifelong learning and developing e-learning for all citizens. Specific recommendations, in these respects, were addressed by the Council to seven Member States and all of them have launched DPs reflecting these recommendations. The Barcelona European Council stressed the urgency of further progress on this priority area.

These issues are tackled in several of the common thematic fields identified in section 1.2. (see, in particular, sub-sections iv. and v., and also iii.).

- Tackling youth unemployment and preventing long-term unemployment

Guideline 1 of the EES concerns strategies for early intervention and provision of more effective guidance and (public) employment services. Most of the relevant actions included in the NAPs are reflected in those activities of the DPs that are subsumed under the common thematic fields i. – iii. and, to a lesser extent, vii.. Specific Council recommendations were addressed to eight Member States, and all of them have launched DPs in this field.

- Regional and local action for employment

Guideline 11 sets out priorities for policies in this field. Though it is placed under Pillar 2 (Entrepreneurship) of the EES, most of its specific aspects are clearly reflected in the majority of the DPs launched under Theme A of EQUAL. The concept of Development Partnership constitutes in itself a strong strategic element for concerted local/regional action. The size of many DPs, as defined by the number of key actors and organisations involved, and the range of their activities indicate that they are, in fact, examples of the type of action that this Guideline is intended to encourage. A substantial number of DPs are closely linked to regional employment pacts or are part of, or create, regional/inter-regional networks for labour market integration. The vast majority of all DPs have a local focus or impact. Many are aimed at mobilising a wide range of local/regional resources to combine social and economic development in a territorial approach. Some of these have a focus on neighbourhood development, whilst others aim to explore other potential growth areas of the local economy, or new perspectives in the social economy.

These aspects permeate many of the common thematic fields described in section 1.2.. They emerge particularly clearly from activities subsumed under sub-sections i., ii., vi. and x..

- Combating discrimination and exclusion

Guideline 7 calls for a coherent set of policies to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination in the labour market. This covers the very heartland of the EQUAL Initiative. The GL attaches particular importance to the labour market integration of three specific disadvantaged groups namely, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and migrant workers. In the DPs launched under Theme A, these are the most frequently quoted target groups.

In relation to ethnic minorities and migrant workers, the Council has addressed specific recommendations to three Member States and all of them have initiated DPs in this area.

While the whole EQUAL Initiative responds to the priorities of Guideline 7, the activities of DPs subsumed under two of the common thematic fields described in section 1.2. might add some new aspects (see sub-sections viii. and ix.).

The priorities set out in these horizontal objectives and Guidelines could provide important reference points for evaluating and assessing the outcomes of the DPs, in general, and for directing the work of the ETG(s), in particular.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

The overview presented in section 1.2. illustrates a wide range of thematic options for the future work of European Thematic Groups. However, the relative significance of each of these thematic options is likely to vary across Member States and, in practical terms, it would also be impossible to work simultaneously on all themes. Therefore, it will be important to discuss priorities for the selection of common themes, the scope for combining different themes without losing their specific focus, as well as any relevant thematic areas that are not covered in the present overview. All this has to take account of the common EU policy context, the evolving situations in individual Member States and the progress that has been made by the Development Partnerships since they were launched.

The selection of thematic clusters for future work of the ETG(s) could be tentatively based on the following criteria:

- the themes that are finally selected should be clearly linked to the priorities of the European Employment Strategy, as outlined in the current Guidelines and the Member States' NAPs;
- the work in each thematic area should be able to draw on contributions from a sufficient number of DPs (critical mass) with specific experience;
- each thematic area should involve the active participation of at least six Member States with a balanced geographical representation across the Union, and possibly also attract a stated interest from Member States not directly involved;
- priority themes for the work of the ETG(s) should demonstrate a clear link and potential contribution to the relevant networking and mainstreaming activities initiated by Member States.

This working document is not intended to anticipate decisions on thematic clustering for the work of the ETG(s) but to present information that can facilitate discussion in the workshop sessions at the Barcelona conference which should lead to concrete common proposals. However, some of the thematic fields outlined in section 1.2. appear to respond to a larger extent than others to the criteria suggested above. These include:

- Comprehensive strategies for the integration of people with multiple disadvantages (i.)

The essential features that characterise comprehensive strategies and the value of, and the urgent need for, such approaches have already been extensively explored in previous Community programmes, especially in several strands of the Community EMPLOYMENT Initiative. General use of such strategies, however, is the exception, rather than the rule. Particular difficulties appear to be related to problems of implementation, rather than to the acceptance of the concept. Therefore, it could be interesting to concentrate initial work in this thematic field on methodological aspects such as strategies for local or regional partnership; approaches to overcoming barriers to, and using lubricants for, effective networking; cooperation management.

- Modernising existing, or developing new, employment services (ii.).
- Individualised plans for training and social and labour market integration (iii.).

Singling out these three thematic aspects does not imply that the others are of minor importance.

Some options of a different nature should also be considered that relate more to organisational aspects rather than to the content of thematic work:

- The first is the possibility of planning thematic work in a sequential way. Certain thematic topics may be of particular relevance in the initial stages of the Initiative, i.e. in the phase when the Development Partnerships start to put their strategies into operation, at the beginning of action 2. The first of the three aspects listed above would fall into this category. It would then be possible to concentrate on other thematic priorities, at a later stage.
- A second consideration relates to the question of how to deal with the transversal issues of mainstreaming, empowerment and gender mainstreaming. The analysis of data from the ECDB clearly suggests that a large number of DPs would benefit from further discussion and exchange of experience related to these themes. In the case of a sequential model, this should preferably take place at the initial stage of action 2. Alternatively, these issues could be integrated with each of the other thematic fields, if and when, they are addressed by the ETG(s).
- The third consideration concerns the practical activities carried out by the ETG(s) and the tangible outputs that could be expected from their work (e.g. identification of examples of best practice; targeted and structured exchange of experience; support to wider thematic networking; contribution to benchmarking activities and conferences or other manifestation at European level; interaction with thematic networks in Member States; preparation of reports and guides...).

All these aspects could impact on the composition of the ETG(s), and will have implications for the resources required and the time schedules to be envisaged.

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS

1. Does the thematic overview presented in this working document adequately reflect the priorities set by Member States, and by the Development Partnerships that they have selected? Which aspects need to be added? Which re-grouping of common thematic fields could be envisaged in order to accommodate all Member State priorities?
2. Which criteria, in addition to, or chosen from, those proposed in section 3. above, should be applied in order to determine the thematic priority/priorities for the work of the ETG(s)?
3. Which approach should be adopted to cover the full spectrum of common thematic fields?
4. What aspects should be considered in defining the operational modalities such as the composition of, and role of the members of, the group, working methods, and life time/time schedules for the work of the ETG(s)?
5. How could effective interaction between the ETG(s) and networking and mainstreaming activities in the Member States best be organised?
6. What outcomes should result from the work of the ETG(s)?

THEME 1B: EMPLOYABILITY - COMBATING RACISM

“Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market.”

1. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

In total, 82 DPs were approved that address the theme of combating racism. These were selected by 11 Member States (A, Bnl, FI, FR, D, GR, IT, NL, PT, ES and UKgb) and by a candidate country (CZ).

The Member State that has the greatest concentration of Theme B projects is France with 26, followed by Austria with nine, while Belgium (nl) and the Czech Republic have one project each.

The analysis that was carried out covered 60 of the 82 DPs, launched under Theme B.

1.1. CONSISTENCY WITH THEME B AND NATIONAL CIPs

The vast majority of the projects reflect the objectives and activities that their respective Member States have cited in their CIPs and many also intend to undertake additional activities in order to provide a more complete package of provision.

There are two main lines of action that can be detected in the DPs:

- The first is concerned with improving the existing situation and creating a climate that is more conducive to the social and professional integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities. Activities undertaken in this respect include everything from public information campaigns to improving the skills and understanding of workers in employment services so that they are in a better position to handle the issues or problems presented by members of immigrant or ethnic minority communities;
- The second line of action is related to improving the employability of members of the target group through a range of training and employment measures. In this respect, these DPs are very similar to those DPs that have been approved under Theme A, except that they are directed at a single target group.

There are elements of reinforcement between Theme A and this second line of action in Theme B and that is why a common approach has been adopted to the analysis of DPs in each of these themes. It should be noted that more than 20% of Theme A DPs cater for immigrants or ethnic minorities, either as the sole focus or amongst other target groups. There is an even more direct correlation in the case of Denmark. The objective for all Danish Theme A DPs is “to improve the labour market opportunities of immigrants, refugees and their descendants” and this has resulted in the approval of 11 DPs that also reflect the same two lines of action that are indicated above.

In general, many of the methods and approaches that will be developed in the Theme B DPs are also relevant to the Theme AS, Asylum Seekers. Perhaps the most obvious examples are citizenship training (including language) and multi-cultural teaching methods. At Member State level, it is possible to detect direct links between the intentions of some Theme B DPS and the activities selected by that Member State for Theme AS.

1.2. COMMON THEMATIC FIELDS

A number of common theme emerged from the results of the analysis. In some instances there may be a degree of overlap in activities undertaken within the fields but each of them has its own

distinctive focus. These fields are described below and a graphical overview of their representation in the DPs and in Member States is included at the end of this section.

Enhancing the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises to manage cultural diversity

A closer consideration of the DPs indicates that almost 85% address this topic amongst others. Some 20% of the DPs are also concerned with modernising employment services and together these figures indicate the relative importance of the first line of action identified above.

Of the DPs that intend to enhance the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises, the majority are concerned with actions relating to awareness raising, promotion of best practice and the introduction of quality labels or awards. This is a set of activities that seems to be particularly relevant to Austria with two thirds of all the DPs working, to some extent, on such approaches. Awareness raising may include training for managers or for those responsible for HR development and a number of projects are also experimenting with new approaches such as sector specific web sites or working with particular sectors. For example, one German partnership is providing additional training related to racism and xenophobia for skilled crafts instructors and intends to arrange a nation-wide transfer of results through the participation of the central professional organisations of the craft sector. One common focus that emerges in relation to awareness raising for employers, is improving their understanding of the value of a diverse work force. The promotion of best practice is also a core issue for a number of DPs including one in the Netherlands, which is essentially a mainstreaming project attempting to spread approaches that have been successfully tested in one region to other regions throughout the country. A small number of DPs in Theme B and also in Theme A are working to introduce some form of labels or awards that will be given to companies or organisations that demonstrate a sensitivity to equality of opportunity in their employment practices or, in one Theme B DP, in their journalistic output.

Another grouping of DPs is concerned with the introduction of new bridging functions and again this concern also relates to the modernisation of employment services. Several DPs mention new or extended job profiles such as job coach, employment mediator, cultural mediator and even social entertainer. In a number of instances, members of the target group are to be trained to take on these responsibilities or will be used as contact and outreach workers to help others make use of the services offered by the DP. Similarly, representatives of the target group will be used as positive role models and as trainers.

A final grouping of projects under this heading is working on the assessment of prior learning, competences and skills. In some instances, this assessment aims to ensure a more effective functioning of the DP by providing better-tailored training or work experience opportunities. In others, the action is more directed at employers to assist them to realise the potential of immigrants or people from ethnic minority backgrounds and this can also include the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.

New approaches to the delivery of training and learning

The next largest group of projects (28%) will introduce such new approaches. Many of these will have a preparatory phase in which they will attempt to acquire a better understanding of the culture(s), potential and needs of the target group. This increased awareness of values and traditions is particularly apparent in the few projects that are concerned with the social and vocational integration of gypsies and travelling people. Also, in the majority of cases people from the target group will either be directly involved in the design of the provision or will be represented by various interest groups that work with that target group. Through this process, the DPs intend to develop low threshold (non-threatening) training or citizenship training or multi-cultural teaching methods. Indeed, one ambitious Finnish project is intending to develop a multi-cultural teaching model for the vocational training sector and, at the same time, monitor the changes in the institutions that result from the enrolment of immigrants. In a similar vein, the DP from the Czech Republic is a national project dedicated to the development and implementation of formal and informal programmes of intercultural education, at all levels.

In a minority of cases, the training that will be developed will have a very specific focus that is adapted to particular needs. For example, another Finnish DP is developing training that will be of assistance to the very small groups of immigrants that live in relatively isolated rural

communities, while one UK DP intends to create positive action traineeships, especially for graduates coming from an ethnic minority background.

Alternative forms of employment/work experience

Many of the DPs, some 27%, are involved in trying to find new routes towards employment but only a few descriptions actually contain a detailed explanation of what they intend to do. Only two projects mention this approach as being the core purpose of their activities. Both of these are French projects. The first intends to use temporary work/contracts as a means of improving the vocational integration of immigrants. This project will also offer training and awareness raising to the staff of the sponsoring temporary employment agency and of the companies that will hire the temporary workers. The second DP will promote social and vocational integration through micro-companies, co-operatives and business incubators. It hopes to establish new sources of funding for business start-up and adapted training for the “would-be” entrepreneurs. The other DPs mention such activity as one aspect of a series of measures that they intend to take. Many of the approaches that will be pursued such as the development of social firms or companies in the third sector and the use of business incubators were well represented in the former ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives but one new aspect that emerges in the Austrian and UK DPs is the use of work experience opportunities in the voluntary sector.

Integration activities “outside” training and employment measures

These integration activities can be grouped into three different categories and seem to be of greater importance in the southern Member States. They are represented in over just under 22% of all DPs.

The first category is cultural activities and here there is scope for a wide range of actions. One Greek DP will introduce contributions from immigrant communities into the traditional national festivals. Another interesting Italian DP will use theatre to portray the links between the causes and the outcomes of the emigration of a large number of Italian citizens during the last century and those of the immigration that the country is currently experiencing. This project is also interesting from the empowerment point of view, as it will give the people involved the chance to “tell their own story” and will also provide training for possible employment in show business.

The second grouping of DPs operates anti-racist or anti-discrimination campaigns. There are some projects that will develop these campaigns as part of a range of other measures but the DPs that appear to concentrate on this aspect are to be found in Italy and Greece. In Italy, there will be a national information campaign to overcome cultural barriers using two TV channels and a variety of web portals. In another major project, an information and communications agency will create and train a network of press and media journalists including members of the target group. A Greek DP will produce and broadcast programme and information slots, run training for journalists and publish a guide to good practice for the media. A second DP, again in Greece, will produce educational material for the school of journalism.

The DPs in the final grouping under this heading intend to set up observatories and monitoring systems. Many DPs will undertake some research or preliminary enquires to obtain an initial picture of the nature and types of discrimination that exist in their geographical area or to identify examples of good practice. This will then be used to help in the planning or formulation of their activities. There are, however, a small number of projects, notably in Spain, which will go further and establish some form of permanent system of observation and surveillance.

Modernising existing, or developing new, employment services

As has already been indicated, a significant number of DPs are working on the modernisation of employment services. The vast majority are involved in providing in-service training for existing staff and sometimes, this training prepares individuals to assume new roles such as those indicated in the section above on “Enhancing the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises to manage cultural diversity”. Some 20% of all DPs are concentrating on this particular topic and it also seems to be an issue that is relevant to most Member States that are involved in Theme B. There are also a few DPs that hope to improve the quality of the

employment services that are on offer through more intensive networking between both public and private agencies, often in conjunction with employers.

Preparation for employment in specific jobs/sectors

The question of preparation for specific jobs has largely been dealt with in the section on “Enhancing the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises to manage cultural diversity”. However, 15% of the DPs are preparing members of the target group for employment in specific sectors. The best-represented sector is the media with DPs working on TV programmes/slots, journalism and broadband content and here there is a very strong link with empowerment or anti-discrimination and anti-racism campaigns. A Portuguese DP is also promoting employment in the footwear industry through the development of an integrated methodology to accommodate the counselling, training and integration of immigrants with their direct involvement in shaping all of these processes. Other sectors, which are represented in EQUAL DPs that were also present in the former ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives, are construction, care and neighbourhood services.

Promoting non-discriminatory practices in the workplace

While there are a number of DPs, about 12%, that address this issue, there are only a few that retain it as their main interest. The DP from Belgium (nl) intends to produce a manual on positive action in enterprises and to operate modular training courses for trade union delegates and activists. Such trade union involvement is also represented in a French project that will identify and test tools, develop indicators of discrimination and promote awareness. A second French project will carry out an audit of existing practices leading to the training of, and action by, staff representatives. These projects are also related to the promotion of best practice DPs mentioned under the heading “Enhancing the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises to manage cultural diversity.”

Territorial approaches

Again there are about 12% of the DPs that are adopting Territorial Approaches and relating the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities with local development strategies. All of these partnerships involve a variety of different actors. In the case of one French DP, assistance will be given to cities in the region concerned to develop local plans to combat discrimination. The concept of producing local plans is also present in at least one German partnership. The French DP is related to the government’s “Grand Projet de Ville” programme and, in the UK, there is some evidence of links between DPs and government strategies for urban or neighbour renewal. This is a linkage, which is even more pronounced in UKgb Theme A DPs.

Comprehensive strategies

A similar number of DPs are adopting comprehensive strategies for the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities. These strategies embrace as many different aspects as possible and attempt to consider the needs of the target groups in an holistic way recognising that people may have to overcome a range of barriers or problems before they are able, or willing, to participate in training or employment measures. This is well demonstrated by a Spanish DP that is promoting integration in both urban and rural areas. This partnership will provide reception activities, a housing service offering rented accommodation, a social service particularly to assist in the reconciliation of family and working life through a network of carers and au-pairs, cultural activities, basic training including language and IT skills, training to establish social firms, a work integration centre and a range of publications and press and media slots to promote cultural diversity. There are similar such inter-agency or inter-service partnerships represented in the other DPs and an additional sector that is also included in some of these is health. The development of such strategies enables all the skills, knowledge and resources that exist in a particular geographical area to be maximised and these strategies are strongly represented in Theme A DPs.

New approaches to guidance, counselling and advice

Approximately 10% of all DPs are exploring such new approaches. The main approach that is being adopted is the creation of one-stop shops. In the case of a UKgb DP, this will be a virtual facility providing information and details about the training and other opportunities that are available. This is, in a sense, paralleled by a Spanish project that intends to offer an on-line information and advisory service. In terms of physical provision, one of the more imaginative approaches is the use by an Italian DP of stations, belonging to the National Railway that are surplus to its current requirements, as non-residential reception centres. This DP represents a co-ordinated approach, on the Calabrian/Ionian coastline, that aims to integrate immigrants, especially from third world countries.

Individual pathways to training and learning

Only 8% of DPs have indicated directly that they will be developing individual or personalised pathways, although others mention tailoring their training to the needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The DPs that focus on individual pathways are concentrated in France and Spain.

Transversal issues: mainstreaming, empowerment, gender mainstreaming

Along with Innovation, Partnership, Transnationality and the Thematic Approach, Mainstreaming and Empowerment are two of the six key principles of the EQUAL Initiative. The Commission's Guidelines for EQUAL also stipulate that the promotion of equality between women and men shall be integral to all thematic fields and require Member States to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach in each of these fields. These three transversal issues should be reflected to some extent in the work of every DP and thus, may be especially relevant for future EU-level thematic work. Information on what Theme B DPs plan to do in these respects is outlined below.

Gender mainstreaming

The most attention to the question of gender mainstreaming seems to be paid by DPs from southern Member States, in particular, Greece, Spain and Portugal. However, in only one case, is there a specific reference to a method that will be used which is a Greek DP that intends to execute an equality audit on the media sector. In the remaining 25% of DPs that indicate an interest in this topic, much more general statements are made such as the intentions "to apply EO across all of the DP's activities" or "to promote best practice in the implementation of EO" or "to establish support networks for women".

Empowerment

As might be expected in a theme that deals with combating racism, 82% of all DPs make some reference to how they intend to increase the empowerment of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The DPs that provide no information about empowerment are usually those that are working to improve the conditions in which access to employment can be extended and may, for example, be setting up observatories or training HR directors or trade union officials in aspects related to handling diversity in the workplace.

Some DPs tend to see empowerment in terms of the nature of the customised offer that they will provide to help individuals in their social and professional integration or in the fact that organisations representing immigrants or ethnic minorities will be involved in the partnership or in certain aspects of its operation. These approaches are represented by some 38% of the DPs.

A second larger grouping of DPs takes a much more pro-active approach to empowerment both in terms of the operation of the partnership and in the roles that they prepare people to play within the partnership or in the wider community. This more direct form of empowerment is particularly evident in the UKgb DPs, which may be some reflection of the fact that UKgb led a very active and committed group of Member State representatives that worked on the theme of Empowerment. The activities of this Group were part of the EU-level thematic analyses that took place during the former ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives and the outcomes are still available as a thematic report in the library section of the EQUAL web site under the title "Empowerment".

The methods that Member States' DPs will use to promote and develop such forms of empowerment are many and varied and, in terms of undertaking an active role in the operation of the DP, they include:

- Training to plan and to carry out evaluations;
- Involvement in focus groups or workshops on particular topics or aspects;
- Involvement in monitoring or steering committees or, even, the board of the DP itself;
- Providing peer support or positive role models.

Then, those DPs that are more ambitious will also provide opportunities and prepare the beneficiaries to play an external or representational role as:

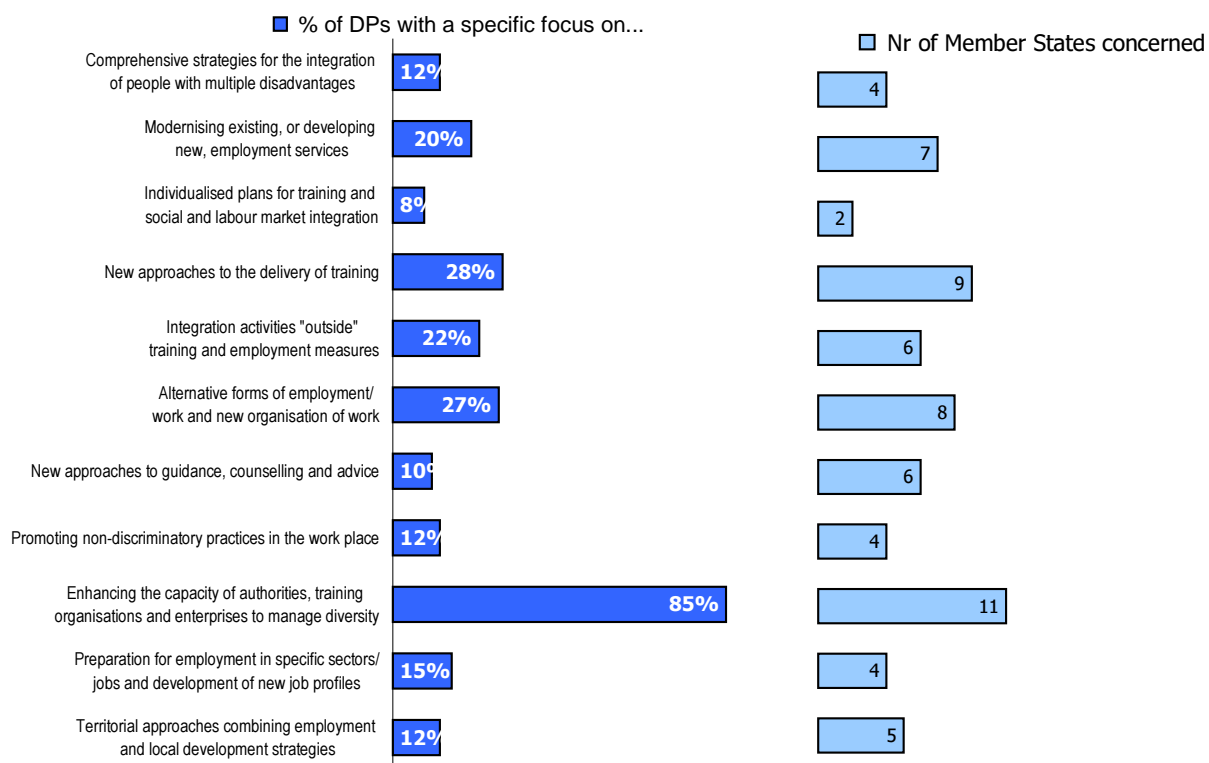
- Participants on transnational exchanges;
- Educational or cultural mediators;
- Leaders in relation to other groups of immigrants;
- Staff in multi-cultural centres;
- Press and media journalists.

▪ Mainstreaming

The Guidelines that were issued by the Commission for the implementation of EQUAL have resulted in the creation of wider and more all-encompassing partnerships, either geographical or sectoral. Whilst, this bodes well for the mainstreaming potential of the DPs, their intentions, in terms of Theme B mainstreaming activities, are not always well specified in terms of the information that is currently available in the EQUAL database. For example, only 25% of all DPs make a specific reference to the strategies that they will adopt for mainstreaming and another 20% make a very general reference such as "materials will be produced to disseminate the results" or "tools will be made available to others". Exceptions to this are GR and UKgb whose DPs often detail target audience, products and channels or methods of dissemination and to a lesser, but still useful, degree DPs in Spain and Italy.

There must also be some reservations about the critical mass of projects in certain Member States. Whilst only 25% of French Theme B DPs make any reference at all to mainstreaming, there are at least 26 projects that will be operating in the country and it will be possible to capitalise on their combined experience. In certain other countries, which have fewer projects, the fact that the DPs are either of national or major significance, as is the case in Greece or Italy, should help to realise their potential impact. The classical example is the Czech Republic that was not required to submit a CIP and has just one project. However, this DP is a project covering the whole country that intends to develop and implement formal and informal programmes of intercultural education. It has a comprehensive mainstreaming strategy that aims to change the attitudes and behaviour of key actors by involving educational institutions at all levels together with the educational inspectorate.

Common Thematic Fields



2. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

Theme B is set in a context that has been built on the fact that 1997 was established as the European Year Against Racism and on the momentum, which that Year generated. There is now considerable action at EU level in terms of policy development, legislation, monitoring and mainstreaming, including the introduction of new funding programmes and, naturally, such action also has a reflection at Member State level.

The Amsterdam Treaty, which entered into force in May 1999, strengthened the provisions governing human rights and fundamental freedoms at the heart of the EU (Article 6 and Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union), and introduced a new Article 13 into the EC Treaty. Article 6 recalls the commitments of the EU to defend human rights and basic freedoms. Article 7 introduces the possibility for the EU to take sanctions against one of its Member States, which may have violated gravely and constantly fundamental rights and basic freedoms.

The European Commission undertook a wide consultation with Member States, civil society, the social partners and the European Parliament to decide how to implement these new powers. In November 1999, within six months of the new Amsterdam Treaty coming into force, the Commission produced a package of proposals, which included two draft directives and a draft Action Programme, to give shape to the Community's efforts to combat discrimination and promote equality. The proposals were ambitious and demanding but were nevertheless widely supported and quickly pushed forward in discussions in the Council and the European Parliament, with the result that all three elements were unanimously adopted, in a very short space of time.

The Community's legislative framework now includes:

- a Directive (Council Directive 2000/43/EC) prohibiting racial and ethnic discrimination in employment, education, social security, healthcare, and in access to goods and services and housing;

- a second Directive (Council Directive 2000/78/EC) prohibits discrimination in employment on grounds of religion and belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- a Community Action Programme (Council Decision 2000/750/EC) to promote the study of discrimination and exchanges of experience and good practice between the Member States.

The two Directives lay down standards, which will provide a common level of protection against discrimination across the Union and which will require changes to the existing legislative framework in all Member States. The Member States have until 2003 to transpose the two directives into national law and, while they are free to provide higher levels of protection than required by Community law, they must at least meet the minimum standards of these two Directives. This general move towards the recognition of fundamental rights and non-discrimination in the EU, was reinforced by the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights at the Nice European Council on 7 December 2000.

The third element, in the above package, is the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2001-2006) and it came into force on 1 January 2001. It will run for six years with a budget of just under 100 million euros. It works with national, local and regional authorities, bodies for the promotion of equal treatment, social partners, non-governmental organisations, universities and research institutes, national statistical offices and the media to promote:

- equality in public administrations;
- equality in the media;
- equal participation in political, economic and social decision-making;
- equal access to goods and services, including housing, transport, culture, leisure and sport;
- monitoring of discrimination, including multiple discrimination;
- dissemination of information about rights to equal treatment and non-discrimination;
- the mainstreaming of anti-discriminatory policies and practices.

The Programme is split into three strands, which:

- enable the Community to study and evaluate the impact of discrimination in the Member States and the effectiveness of measures to combat it;
- promote exchanges of experience and good practice between actors in the Member States;
- allow the Community to raise awareness about the fight for equality at a European level.

In addition to new legislation and programmes, there is also a considerable amount of activity taking place within the Commission on mainstreaming anti-racism measures into various EU policies and programmes. A working party representing different DGs evaluates and attempts to enhance the impact of this mainstreaming in the fight against racism. The results and findings of this working party are reflected in a Communication from the Commission [COM(2001) 291] which was its Contribution to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in South Africa at the end of last summer.

The added value of civil society organisations in providing a different and legitimate perception of need in the formulation of policies and programmes is recognised. Thus, the Commission has continued to support the Migrants' Forum in its broad role of providing representation at European level for immigrant and ethnic minority organisations and has also supported the European Network against Racism in its work at local, regional, national and European level.

In 1997, the European Council adopted a Regulation setting up a European Monitoring Centre (EUMC) on Racism and Xenophobia, in Vienna. This Centre is now fully operational and there are a number of its activities, which are relevant to EQUAL.

It has established the European Racism and Xenophobia Information Network called RAXEN with National Focal points in each Member State. The core task of RAXEN is to provide the European Union and its Member States with objective, reliable and comparable data, including examples of, and models for, good practices to help them to adapt existing measures or formulate new courses of action. The first task that the EUMC asked the RAXEN National Focal Points to perform was a mapping exercise. Its objective was to identify and document what is known, where and by whom, and what activities have been, or are going on, in the field of combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in each Member State since 1995. Information on all Member States about "activities", "data" and "publications" will shortly be available.

EUMC also has a working group on key issues that supports the discussion on the "Future of Europe" which is now underway, after the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. It also assists other organisations to cope with diversity and equality in a responsible, positive and creative way. The discussion of the group has focused, in particular, on policies of integration and the different scenarios in Europe.

Then, some of the main recommendations of a recent report, sponsored by EUMC, on Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media stress that all concerned should work together towards achieving the following:

- more visibility, voice and better access for migrant and ethnic minority groups, especially in mainstream media and routine news making, and in all news genres;
- more possibilities for background and investigative reporting and to introduce more positive news frames or formats, instead of the predominant 'problem' format;
- support initiatives in training and programming areas to increase access, participation and improve representation of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities in the media;
- support cooperation and information exchange among media and minority organisations to promote ethnic, cultural, religious diversity in the media.

The nature of links between all of the above activities or actions remains to be determined in detail (see 4 below). However, the Commission understands that legislation alone will never be sufficient to ensure equality in practice. That was why the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination was proposed, as it will allow the Community to explore practical ways of overcoming the barriers created by discrimination in many areas of everyday life, bringing European added value by comparing and contrasting experiences in different parts of the Union. The Commission now believes all of the various developments outlined above, together with the Employment Strategy, the Annual Employment Guidelines, the National Action Plans on Employment and on Social Inclusion and EQUAL, form part of an integrated strategy to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities, thus reducing the human and financial costs of exclusion. Thus EQUAL, just as the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination, has an important role to play in testing new practical approaches to combating discrimination and in disseminating the outcomes that prove to be successful.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

At the beginning of the document, it was indicated that certain objectives within the DPs followed a line of action that was concerned with improving the employability of members of the target group through a range of training and employment measures. It was also noted that such Theme B DPs were very similar to DPs approved under Theme A.

It is therefore suggested that some of the common themes or topics listed in section 1.2. might be more appropriately dealt with by Theme A, as the methods and approaches developed under these topics, would not be specific to the particular target group of Theme B.

There are however five main topics that are directly related to combating racism, as they seek to improve the existing services, facilities and attitudes to create a climate that is more conducive to the social and professional integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities. These are as follows:

1. Enhancing the capacity of authorities, training organisations and enterprises to manage cultural diversity;
2. Integration activities "outside" training and employment measures;
3. Modernising existing or developing new employment services;
4. Promoting non-discriminatory practices in the workplace;
5. New approaches to guidance.

Because of the relatively low number of projects in the last four topics (22 % or less of all DPs), the only topic that deserves to be retained in its own right is the first, as activities related to this topic are represented in 85% of Theme B DPs. It should also be noted that Empowerment is another well-represented issue in Theme B, especially as they majority of DPs that refer to empowerment describe the often innovative and interesting approaches and methods that they will use. It is possible to produce two strong options for Theme B EU-level thematic activities by combining topic 1 with other topics and by combining empowerment with certain sub-topics.

Option 1: "Understanding, Managing and Promoting Cultural Diversity - Enhancing the capacities of authorities, public and private services and employers"

By integrating topic 3 with topic 1 and perhaps with even a contribution from topic 4, a new topic can be produced entitled "Understanding, Managing and Promoting Cultural Diversity - Enhancing the capacities of authorities, public and private services and employers".

The sub-topics which such an ETG might consider could be:

- Awareness raising and sensitisation strategies, including training for staff at all levels;
- The introduction of, and training for, new roles such as employment or cultural mediators or job coaches;
- Quality standards, quality management and quality labels;
- Networking and extended cooperation, particularly in regard to the generalisation of good practice;
- Improved methods for the assessment of prior learning, competences and skills and for the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.

Such a topic would relate to the first objective of the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2001-2006) of promoting equality in public administrations.

Option 2: "Preparing immigrants and people from ethnic minorities to become actors in their own integration"

Within topics 1 and 2 listed above, there are two important sub-sets. In topic 1, there is action concerned with bridging functions that often comprises the training of members of the target group to undertake these roles. This involves 20% of all DPs. Then in topic 2, there are anti racist/anti-discrimination information campaigns that again train members of the target group and involve over 13% of projects. Combining these sub-sets with Empowerment creates a topic such as "Preparing immigrants and people from ethnic minorities to become actors in their own integration".

While there are many different terms and titles used in the DPs for these new roles, an initial grouping of the functions would include:

- Providing leadership or acting as a role model;
- Mentoring and tutoring;
- Representation and advocacy both within the DP and also externally;
- Employment mediation;
- Cultural Mediation;
- Entrepreneurship or business management;
- Outreach and contact;
- Publishing and broadcasting.

Any ETG to be established on such a topic might wish to consider:

- Why or how the new roles have been identified?
- The methods used to recruit or select individuals to undertake these roles;
- The materials or methods used to train or prepare individuals;
- The empowering effect of these roles for the individuals concerned and the wider target group;
- The success of these roles in promoting a local climate or culture, which is more open or supportive to the social and vocational integration of immigrants and people from ethnic minorities.

The choice of such a topic would reflect, to some extent, the Community Action Programme's objectives to promote equal participation in political, economic and social decision-making and equality in the media. It should also produce links with some of areas of work of European Monitoring Centre (EUMC) including its media related activities.

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOP

The following are suggested issues for discussion during the workshop but obviously at the beginning of the workshop, the agenda items should be determined in the light of the preoccupations and interests of all participants:

1. The choice of the topic that any ETG on Theme B should address in this first round of European-level thematic activities;
2. The refining of the definition of the topic, including the various sub-themes or sub-topics that should be considered by the ETG;
3. The links or exchanges that should be established between national networks and the ETG in relation to its topics or sub-topics. These should be designed so that the considerations of the ETG take due account of the day-to-day realities of DPs, whilst capitalising on the successes of their outcomes. At the same time, these links should ensure that national networks or individual DPs can understand the purpose and be updated about the progress of the work of the ETG, so they have a real sense of involvement in, and can contribute more effectively to, the European thematic outputs;
4. The responsibilities that should be assumed by the various Member States that are interested in pursuing the topic and would wish to be involved in an ETG, particularly the Member State(s) that are willing to assume the role of co-ordinator for, at least, the hosting and servicing of the preliminary meeting(s) of the ETG or those that would be prepared to lead the work on any of the sub-topics that have been defined;
5. Depending on the topic chosen for the work of a Theme B ETG, the contacts that should be established with the following bodies or programmes, so that work on the topic might be better informed and its outcomes more effectively mainstreamed or disseminated, at EU or Member State level:
 - The Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination;
 - The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and/or its RAXEN network with National Focal Points in each Member State;
 - The Migrants Forum;
 - The European Network Against Racism.

THEME 2C: ENTREPRENEURSHIP - BUSINESS CREATION

“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”

1. INTRODUCTION

The following is a preliminary discussion document designed to provoke and focus discussion on theme c entrepreneurship (business creation) of the EQUAL Community Initiative at the European Conference to be held in Barcelona on the 16-17th May 2002.

The first set of questions, dealt with in section 2, involves identifying the mainstream policy targets by asking:

What are considered to be the main barriers, obstacles and priorities for encouraging entrepreneurship, and notably business creation, at a European level and at the level of different Member States?

This is done by contrasting the priorities of the two main European policy instruments in this area (the European Employment Strategy –EES, and European Charter on Small Businesses -ECSB¹) with the priorities problems and opportunities identified in the EQUAL Programmes of each Member State.

The second set of questions, dealt with in section 3, involves analysing the Work Plans of the 143 Development Partnerships approved for the business creation theme (theme C) under Action 1 of the EQUAL Programme. A common grid agreed by the Commission was used in order to answer:

What are the main barriers, obstacles and opportunities to entrepreneurship addressed by the DPs?

To what extent do they match with the priorities of the national EQUAL programmes and with European mainstream policies (e.g. EES and ECSB)?

In order to go further and analyse the potential of the DPs to form clusters around sub themes which have the potential to effectively mainstream innovative practice, it is necessary to ask a series of complementary questions such as:

How, in practice, are the DPs proposing to tackle particular barriers, obstacles and opportunities (concrete information about actions, methodologies, etc)?

Is it possible to define groupings or clusters of DPs that are working on closely related problems using similar methodologies?

To what extent do these strategies fill gaps or add value to mainstream strategies, particularly in relation EQUAL's objective of combating discrimination and inequality at work, and in access to work?

¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/charter/charter_en.pdf

What are the main strategies for mainstreaming used by the DPs and to what extent can these be classified into major groups.

However, in this discussion document it will only be possible to make some preliminary hypotheses for two reasons. Firstly, at the time of writing it has not been possible to complete the analysis of all the DP work plans (133 over 143). Secondly and more importantly, the work plans presented at the start of Action 1 are often couched in quite general terms and it is often not possible to decipher exactly how DPs propose to carry out their objectives. Action 1 of EQUAL precisely provides the DPs with time to develop the concrete details of their strategies. The discussion at the workshop in Barcelona should, therefore, help to provide further evidence of the developments that have taken place.

Section 4 of the document uses the preliminary findings to provide a series of orientations for the work of a European Thematic Network on Entrepreneurship.

Finally, section 5 concludes with three blocks of questions designed to ensure that the discussion at the workshop on entrepreneurship in Barcelona leads to concrete results in terms of a programme of action for mainstreaming the work of the 1.382 individual partners that are taking part in this pillar of the EQUAL Initiative across Europe.

2. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

Over the last 5-10 years a number of factors have led both the EU and Member States to develop a far more strategic and comprehensive approach towards enterprise policy.

Firstly, a series of processes have forced many regions to look for alternatives to policies which simply try to place unemployed people in existing firms. These factors include:

- The inexorable restructuring, productivity growth and employment loss of traditional agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Much of this is due to the decisions of large firms responding to global forces. In the regions that are heavily dependent on these sectors conventional sources of jobs can literally dry up.
- The huge financial cost of maintaining these sectors and the regions that depend on them, has encouraged a shift towards the mobilisation of “endogenous” potential which, in many cases, means small and medium sized firms.

Secondly, however, there are a number of reasons why Europe’s rich socio-economic fabric of SMEs is increasingly being seen in a more strategic light, rather than simply as a residual alternative to conventional industrial and employment policies. These reasons include:

- The vital role that SMEs play in the European economy, both in absolute and in relative terms. SMEs account for 99% of all firms and 53 % of total employment in Europe, a far higher proportion than in the US or Japan. As a result, the launch and growth of SMEs has a significant impact on net job creation.
- Many vibrant local economies and regional success stories owe much of their development to dynamic “clusters” of SMEs and an environment which is conducive to business creation.
- The creation of SMEs can play a vital role in new service based growth sectors (the environment, tourism, leisure, information technology and so on)
- SMEs are often instrumental in the development of innovations which, if successful, can spread through the rest of the economy.
- The opportunities that new information and communication technologies offer SMEs both in their relationship with large firms and with the market.

These trends have encouraged Member States to shift away from simplistic approaches based on grant aiding everything that moves and/or simply maximising start-ups in the hope that they will survive. In particular, there are a number of avenues of policy intervention that offer promising openings for the work of EQUAL Development Partnerships.

In the first place, there is a growing recognition of the importance of the general social, administrative, fiscal and legal climate on entrepreneurship. Although many of these areas may be out of the reach of most EQUAL Development Partnerships, others, such as attitudes to entrepreneurship in schools can be targets for action.

Secondly, the high failure rates experienced as a result of many early initiatives which prioritised various measures to encourage start-ups (e.g. first stage advice, grant aids, etc) has led to a growing understanding that enterprise creation must be seen as a complex process involving a minimum 5 year cycle (6 months to 2 years to get from the first idea to the start-up, 3 years for the start-up to show its viability).

At different stages of the cycle the entrepreneur requires specific inputs or services (eg. first stage advice on legal and administrative issues, basic business training, access to finance, property, appropriate technology, information about markets and so on). An overemphasis on one input at a particular stage of the cycle together with gaps in other inputs and stages can result in high death rates and extremely costly failures in both policy and social terms. This leads to the need to find a balanced coordination and division of labour between support agencies and services.

Thirdly, the same kind of grid showing the inputs required at different stages of the cycle of SME creation can be used to analyse the specific obstacles faced by disadvantaged entrepreneurs for which EQUAL is to develop more effective support instruments.

A very useful framework for the DP partnerships in this area is the study² for DG Enterprise carried out by Middlesex University which precisely analyses the specific obstacles faced by women, ethnic minorities, young people and co-entrepreneurs in terms of a list of the inputs/services they require in the process of creating a firm.

Finally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of both sectoral and territorial clusters of SMEs. Formal and informal networks of SMEs and their linkages with both large firms and other public and private institutions (public purchasing, research and development, training establishments etc) can strongly influence the rate of new firm creation and their viability. Similar networks also play a vital role among the entrepreneurial capacities to be stimulated under EQUAL (for example, women in craft or caring activities, immigrants in food, catering and textiles, etc). Clearly, this also opens up potentially interesting lines of action for both national and European EQUAL Thematic Groups.

2.1. THE MAINSTREAM POLICY FRAMEWORK

These kinds of developments have had an impact on a large number of mainstream EU and national policies. However, the two most important EU frameworks for enterprise policy, are undoubtedly the second pillar of European Employment Strategy, launched at the Luxembourg European Council in 1997, and the European Charter for Small Enterprises endorsed at the Feira European Council in 2000.

Each of these policy frameworks assumes the overarching objective set at the Lisbon European summit of making Europe the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy by the year 2010 together with subsequent objectives concerning social integration (Stockholm

² *Young Entrepreneurs, Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs and Co-Entrepreneurs in the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe*. Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research (CEEDR), Middlesex University Business School, UK. Final report to the European Commission, DG Enterprise. July 2000.

2001) and sustainable development (Gothenburg 2001) . Both also tackle enterprise policy from different but complementary angles .

The entry point for the EES is the creation and maintenance of employment, while the key objective of the European Charter on Small Businesses is to improve the conditions for the creation and growth of businesses. Both strategies include mechanisms for translating their objectives and guidelines into national policy and, transversally, into other EU policies.

It would seem, therefore, that a clear starting point for examining the potential for mainstreaming the pilot DPs and their strategies promoted by EQUAL is to examine the match between the priorities of the EES, the European Charter for Small Enterprise and the objectives of the Member States in their respective EQUAL programmes.

EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY Key measures reported in NAPS for 2001 for Entrepreneurship Pillar	EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES
1. Assessing the impact of new legislation 2. Less burden on business. 3. Less obstacles to start-ups 4. Better access to finance 5. Combat undeclared work 6. Job creation in services, environment, knowledge society 7. Easing procedures on hiring additional staff The 2002 EES Objectives include further references to: 8. Education and training for entrepreneurship 9. Targetted business services 10. Encouraging regional and local action for employment 11. Tax reforms for employment and training	1. Education and training for entrepreneurship 2. Cheaper and faster start-up 3. Better legislation and regulation 4. Availability of skills 5. Improving on-line access 6. More out of the single market 7. Taxation and financial matters 8. Strengthening the technological capacity of small enterprises 9. Successful e-business models and top-class small business support 10. Develop stronger, more effective representation of small enterprises interests at Union and National Level <p style="text-align: right;">* Differences in bold</p>

- It can be seen that both the EES and the ESCE place a major emphasis on creating the right legislative, tax and administrative environment for SMEs. These issues are very difficult to deal with at the level of EQUAL DPs, except perhaps through studies and similar actions.
- It can also be seen that there is a great deal of synergy between the priority actions of both the EES and the ECSE. The main differences refer, on the one hand, to the priority given to creating employment in key sectors and areas under the EES as well as the concern to combat illegal working. On the other hand, the ECSE raises technological and market issues which affect the viability of small businesses, which are not raised under this pillar of the EES. The Charter also raises a separate set of questions about representation (the DPs themselves may be a partial answer to this).

2.2. PRIORITIES FOR STIMULATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EQUAL (NATIONAL CIPS)

The following table presents national priorities grouped under various clusters: the CIPS are expressed in general terms and more details may be found in the programming complements. The following table presents a preliminary approximation:

Barriers / Obstacles / Needs	Number of Programmes	Countries/Programmes
Targeted/top class business services³		
1.Better access to business support services for disadvantaged groups	11	Bfg, Bd, F, DE, EL, IRL, NL, Pt, ES, SE, UK
2.Better aftercare services to reduce death rates. Need for mentoring, advice, etc	5	Bd, DE, EL, NL, ES
3.Need for coordination /specialisation between support agencies	2	F, DE
4.Need for networking among firms. Need for collective approaches to business services	4	F, NL, Pt, ES
5.Targetted services to support businesses orientated at social needs.	3	Bf, IRL, NL
Better access to finance		
6.Financial gaps for SMEs: loan guarantees, seed capital, risk capital etc.	5	EL, NL, Pt, ES, UK
Promoting job creation in key sectors and areas.		
7.Encouraging regional and local action for employment (jobs based on local needs/resources, etc)	4	P, ES, SE, UK
8.Job creation in growth services, environment, knowledge society, etc	1	Bd
9.Need to improve use of new technology skills and methods.	1	ES
Creating the climate for entrepreneurship		
10.Improving links between school, university and work	1	DE
11. Removing obstacles to harmonizing work and family life.	1	NL

³ *Creating Top-Class Business Support Services*, Commission staff working paper, SEC (2001) 1937

12. Reduce gender stereotypes of entrepreneurs	1	ES
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2.3. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND QUESTIONS THAT ARISE FOR EQUAL FROM THE NATIONAL (COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME) CIPS.

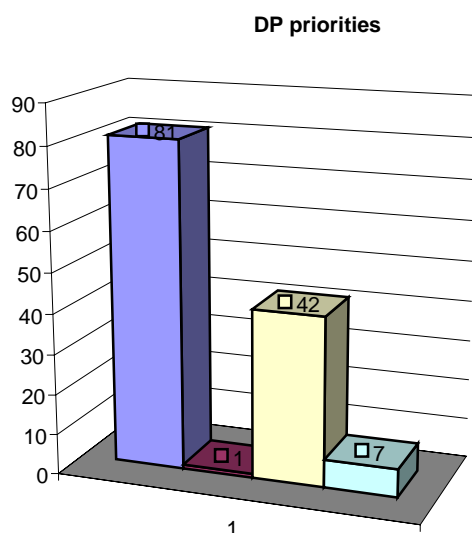
The table above classifies the stated objectives of the national CIPS into a series of categories designed to bring out the links between EQUAL and mainstream EES and ECSE objectives. It must be treated with a great deal of care because the objectives are often stated in different ways in each country and may well have very different operational implications.

Nevertheless this kind of analysis provides some initial evidence of the clustering of priorities which could provide the basis of the mainstreaming to be carried out by thematic networks. For this reason, alongside each preliminary finding, we have posed a question or questions related to mainstreaming:

- As would be expected no reference was found to actions to change the legislative, tax or administrative framework. No reference could be found to combating illegal working. *Would it be possible for DPs to conceive actions in these mainly national spheres?*
- The priorities mentioned by the national CIPs can be grouped under four main headings (**targeted top class business services, better access to finance, promoting job creation in key sectors and areas and creating the climate for entrepreneurship**). All four are also priority areas for the EES and the first two and last are also priorities for the ECSE. This facilitates mainstreaming but it also implies that the innovations carried out by the DPs must refer to the detailed actions and the methods rather than the objectives. Given the close relationship between EQUAL and European mainstream policy frameworks, the question is *are the national programmes missing out any major barriers to enterprise that could be dealt with at a decentralised DP level?*
- In effect, the most striking difference between EQUAL, the EES and the ECSE appears to be the objective - as stated in most CIPs- of increasing the access that disadvantaged groups have to top class business services. As this almost forms part of the definition of the EQUAL programme, the question is *what kinds of innovations are the DPs proposing to introduce in order to increase this access in practice?*
- There is a major emphasis on various aspects of improving and targeting business services in the national EQUAL programmes (aftercare services, mentoring, coordination and specialisation, collective approaches, clusters, etc)..
- As there is also a considerable amount of European and national mainstream work going on in this area, once again, the question is *how are DPs in practice going to add value to existing policies.*
- The second largest priority grouping in the national EQUAL programmes refers to the need to fill various gaps in the financial services available to SMEs. Once again this is a key issue raised in both the EES and the ECSE. *Under which conditions do the DPs have the know-how and the financial links required to test effective pilot strategies and actions in these areas?*
- Another large priority grouping in the national programmes refers to the local approach to job creation. *How do the actions proposed by DPs add value to other local development initiatives and regional policies including other Community Initiatives, such as Leader and Urban?*
- Finally it must be said that there are surprisingly few references to changing the climate for enterprise and to maximising the opportunities for the growth of certain key service sectors. *Why is this? Do the DP work plans corroborate this situation?*

3. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTERSHIPS

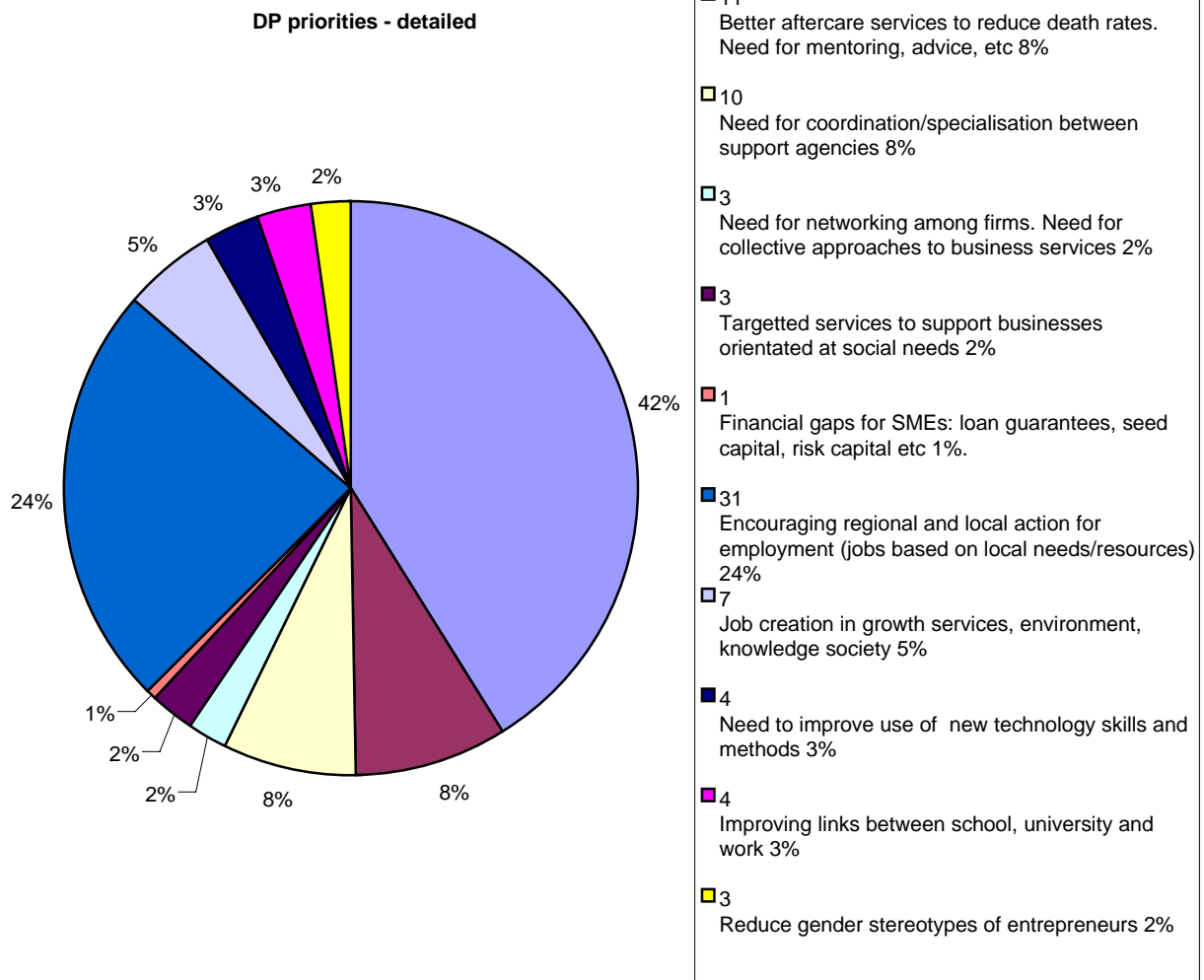
The next logical step is to look at what the Development Partnerships themselves say they wanted to do and compare this to both mainstream policies and CIP objectives. With this aim the DPs have been classified on the basis of the main objective that could be derived from the database texts using the same categories as above. The choice was not always easy as in many DPs there is often an overlap between objectives and activities and some DPs intend to carry out different activities that could belong to a number of different priorities. For simplicity, each DP was grouped according to their first priority only. This analysis provides the following picture.



- Targeted/top class business services
- Better access to finance
- Promoting job creation in key sectors and areas
- Creating the climate for entrepreneurship

- Unsurprisingly the first title in our chart **targeted / top class business services** is the priority most often quoted as it is the most general and falls within the general objective of EQUAL. This fits in with the objectives of the Member States in their CIPs. However, there are two major differences:
- The first is the importance given to **promoting job creation in key sectors and areas** and more particularly *encouraging regional and local action for employment (job based on local needs / resources, etc)*. This is far greater than in the national programmes and presumably reflects the local/regional nature of many partnerships (62% are geographically based)
- Secondly, relatively few DPs included **better access to finance** as their main priority although many more have it as part of their activities. The lack of financial partners within the DPs raises questions about how far they can go in this area (only 2,5% of all partners – the lowest of all categories)

When one breaks down the classification of DP objectives even further, to levels which start to allow us to identify groups which may be able to share and mainstream good practice one arrives at the following picture (the figure before the legend indicates the number of DPs):



- Once again, two clusters of DPs stand out: firstly, those that prioritise the general EQUAL objective of providing better access to business services for disadvantaged groups (42%) and those based around encouraging regional and local action for employment (24%). Together these two groups account for two thirds of all DPs. These would seem to be obvious targets for mainstreaming strategies. But these strategies require far more information on the main actions and methodologies being proposed by the DPs
- Within the overarching category of providing targeted top class business services two issues also stand out (other than access for disadvantaged groups). These are the provision of better aftercare services (8%) and the need for coordination/specialisation (also 8%). These should also be examined more closely for their mainstreaming potential
- Collective approaches and other categories of service provision receive far fewer mentions.
- The figures also confirm the priority given to geographical approaches rather than specific growth sectors such as the environment, knowledge society, etc (24% versus 5%)
- Finally, the figures confirm the relatively low priority (at least in the main objective) given to finance and areas connected to creating a better climate for entrepreneurship

3.1. EMPOWERMENT OF SPECIFIC GROUPS

Some further evidence on the key issues for mainstreaming can be obtained by examining the section on empowerment within the DP work plans. This provides an initial understanding of the groups that are intended to gain most from the capacity building process involved in carrying out the work plan.

The following table shows the number of times different groups are mentioned in relation to empowerment by the DPs.

Priority Groups for Empowerment

Gender	49
Young people	28
Unemployed people	24
Disabled people	21
Disadvantaged groups	20
Equal opportunities	16
Migrants	16
Rural groups	6
Older people	4

However, once again these figures must be treated with caution. Some DPs mention several priority groups. Many of them do not explain how empowerment will be processed through the activities or how they will target their activities specifically to the groups. In addition, the statistics mentioned for the beneficiaries sometimes do not correspond at all with the target groups identified.

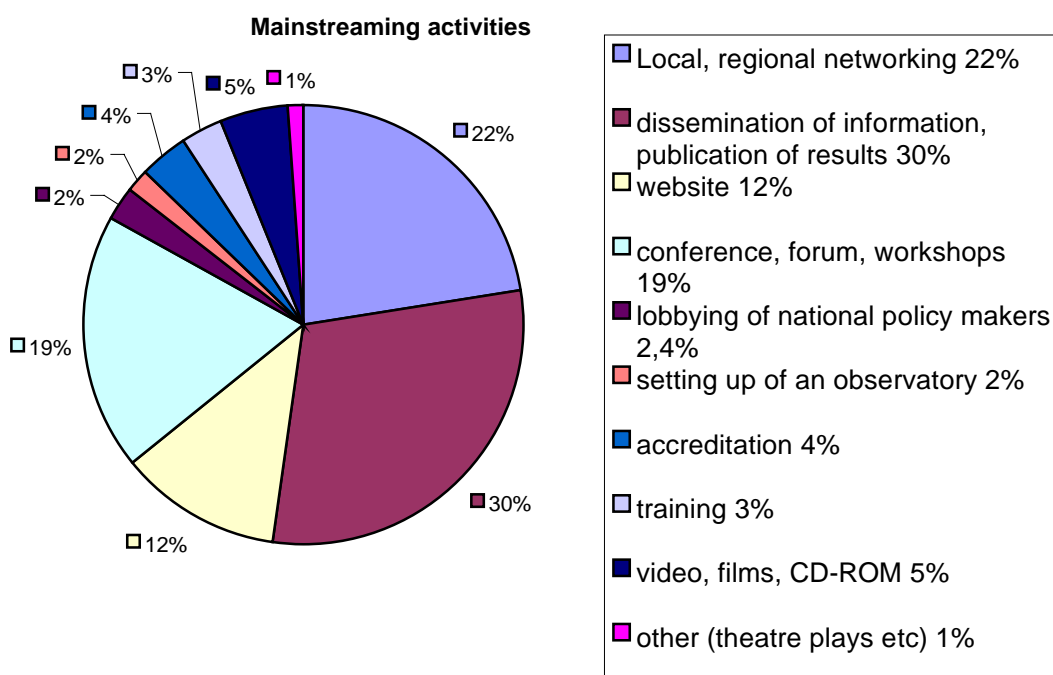
A useful baseline for mainstreaming is to use the analysis carried out for DG Enterprise by Middlesex University (Young Entrepreneurs, Women Entrepreneurs, Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs and Co-entrepreneurs in the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Final Report July 2000) as a starting point for examining the specific problems that these groups face in setting up a business. The clusters of problems/solutions most commonly found among DPS would then be strong candidates for collective approaches taken by both national and European thematic networks. However, at present, there is not sufficiently good evidence to take firm decisions. It will be necessary to obtain further information from the DPs and use the discussion in Barcelona to take this further in the final document.

Transversal issues related to new technology.

Few partnerships specifically focus on creating firms in new technology areas. However, there are many references to using new technology to reinforce both the individual tools (eg business plans, applications for grants, finance and permits) and the knowledge management of networks involved in business support. Unless both national and European networks play a role in this area there is a major danger of duplication and “reinventing the wheel”

3.2. MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES

- Although 105 of the 133 DPs analysed (79%) mention mainstreaming and mainstreaming activities the vast majority refer to different forms of disseminating information (30%), websites (12%) and the organisation of conferences forums, workshops and so on (19%). *It is vital to know what mechanisms are in place for selecting the target audiences and measuring the impact of the dissemination.*
- The second largest category once again reflects the geographical nature of most DPs and refers to local and regional networking. *In this area it is important to find out to what extent the public partners (22% of all partners) are explicitly committed to transferring successful pilot actions.*
- On the other hand, it is interesting to note that employment service providers are rarely members of the partnerships (only 3,8% of partners) and that lobbying national policy makers is a relatively infrequent strategy for mainstreaming (2%). *Once again it is important to ask to what extent the circuits into national policy making are satisfactorily covered in each country*
- Finally, some DPs are working on new certification of quality standards, or an accreditation of training modules (see g 4%). *The question is, accredited by whom at what level?*



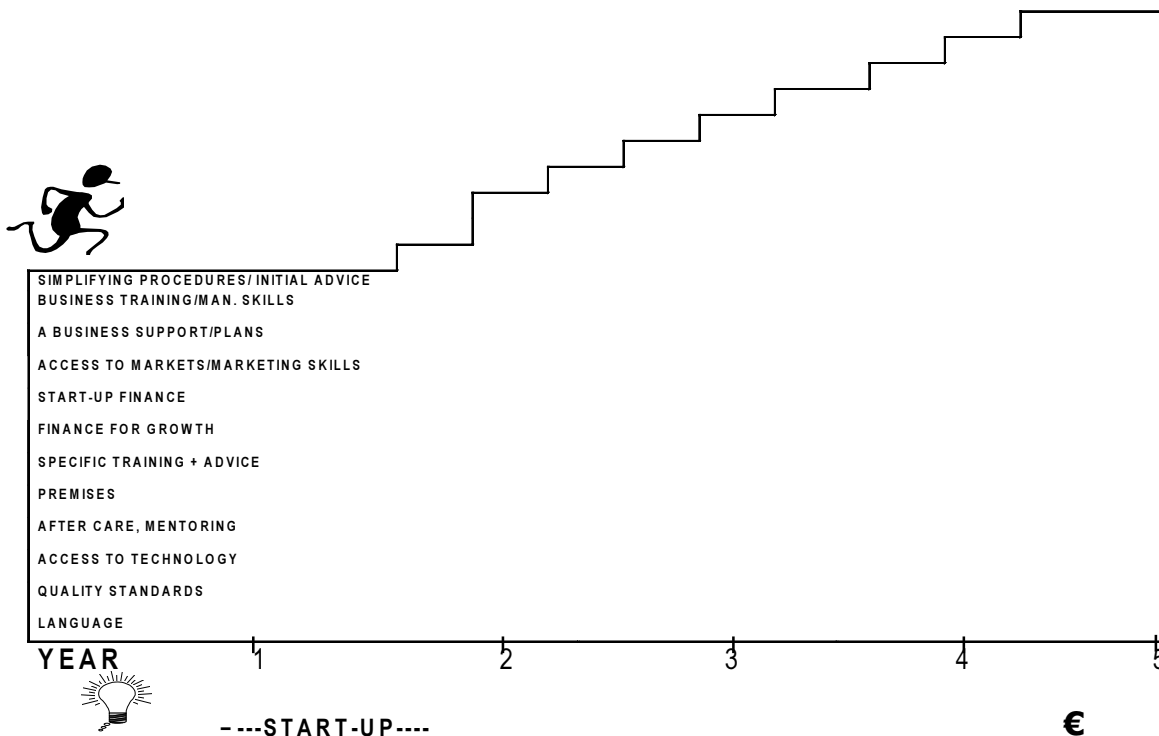
4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

This paper provides some preliminary evidence on the main clusters of interest expressed in the work plans of the 143 Development Partnerships funded under the entrepreneurship theme of EQUAL which should help to shape the working of a future European thematic network on entrepreneurship in three main ways;

Firstly it provides some evidence on the relation between **DP work plans and the main obstacles and opportunities to enterprise:**

- Unsurprisingly, DPs do not consider that they can have a major impact on the legislative and tax environment. However, it is worth asking why there is not more emphasis on education-work links.
- The main clusters of interest fall within two main areas:
 - The provision of top class business services (gaps and obstacles) and
 - Inputs into local/regional approaches (possibly still an under-exploited opportunity).
- Despite the importance given to access to finance in the national plans, the DPs do not give that high a priority in their work plans.

The workshop at Barcelona should explore the areas in more depth by discussing the contribution that EQUAL could make towards finding solutions to the major gaps that entrepreneurs face at different stages of creating a business. This can be done using the following type of grid:



The grid allows one to identify whether the main gaps and obstacles in a particular labour market are in the early stages of creating a business, before start-up (usually 6 months – 2 years after the first idea) or because problems later on cause high death rates. At a local or regional level is also a useful tool for finding out whether there is duplication or over supply of certain kinds of business support and shortages of others. This can lead to strategies for coordination, specialisation and collective approaches to certain services.

Secondly, the information about empowerment shows that although there **is a clear priority given to gender issues, a wide range of disadvantaged groups are targeted**. However, there is little specific evidence about the additional obstacles these groups face in relation to the priority areas mentioned above. Nor is there much information about the improvements in methods or practice that EQUAL groups propose to use to remedy these gaps. Once again this should be a subject of further discussion in the workshop because these innovations in methodology would also be prime candidates for support by the thematic networks.

A similar grid used to the one above can be used to examine the specific problems and policy recommendations for each group. For example, particular groups are likely to require specific support programmes in the early stages of creating a business to compensate for their disadvantages (e.g. language, self-confidence, business skills, etc). On the other hand, the study mentioned by Middlesex University for DG Enterprise on women, immigrants, young people and co-entrepreneurs finds that specific problems of access to finance is a recurrent issue for all groups.

Finally, the section on mainstreaming shows that a great **emphasis is placed on horizontal mainstreaming and dissemination at a local and regional level**. At present, there is little evidence of the linkages between this snowballing activity and its vertical transfer into national or EU policy. This obviously means that both national and European support structures (the networks) will play a vital role in this type of mainstreaming.

Given these preliminary findings we suggest a three stage approach for defining the scope and activities of the European Thematic Networks. The first two stages are aimed at testing the general findings of the discussion document and finding out more specific information about both the priority areas (block 1) and methods (block 2) of EQUAL. In particular, stage1 is concerned with delving deeper into the specific services that DPs might provide in relation to the main obstacles experienced at different stages of the cycle of enterprise creation. On the other hand, stage 2 concentrates on the way EQUAL might help to find solutions to the additional problems faced by disadvantaged groups in their access to these services

The third stage involves using this evidence to construct a possible work programme of a European Thematic Network on Entrepreneurship covering aspects such as the identification of good practice, the conditions for transfer and the activities of dissemination.

A POSSIBLE METHODOLOGY FOR LAUNCHING THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

Stage 1. Agreement on what should be the scope and priorities of a thematic group targeted at the main obstacles and opportunities facing business creation in Europe?

- What obstacles to business creation cannot be dealt with by the DPs? (for example, general changes to the tax and legislative framework).
- What gaps in support structures and support mechanisms do DPs propose to fill in the cycle of business creation? What do and can they add to regional and local approaches to business creation?
- What major obstacles could possibly be dealt with by the DPs but do not appear to receive a priority in the DPs strategies(e.g. access to finance)?

Stage 2. What value added can be provided by EQUAL to make mainstream policies and actions more effective in relation to discrimination and inequality?

- What specific obstacles are faced by different disadvantaged groups in relation to the services and actions being tested by the DPs
- What innovations or improvements to practice are being proposed by the partnerships?
- What does the partnership allow one to do that would be difficult to carry out by conventional means?

Stage 3. On this basis what should be included in the work plan of a European Thematic Group on business creation during the first year of its operation?

- What activities could be carried out to ensure the identification of good practice, not only on the part of the DPs but also by other bodies?
- What activities can be carried out to test the transferability in different contexts (target audience needs and ways of working)?
- What tools should be used for the communication and dissemination of results?

5. QUESTIONS FOR THE BARCELONA WORKSHOP

Given the limited time and the large numbers of people that are expected at the workshop in Barcelona, we suggest that the discussion focus around a reduced set of questions taken from the list above:

- What gaps do DPs propose to fill in the cycle of business creation? What do and can they add to regional and local approaches to entrepreneurship?
- How can and should DPs deal with the specific problems faced by different groups in the cycle of business creation? What do and can they add to other initiatives in these areas?
- What can and should be done by DPs to help overcome the obstacles faced in access to finance?
- What role can the European Thematic Groups play in identifying and benchmarking good practice and improving the professionalism and quality of activities promote entrepreneurship and business creation?
- How can information technology be used both as a tool to overcome the obstacles faced by individual entrepreneurs and as a mechanism used by the ETGs for sharing good practice and avoiding duplication?

The discussion held at the workshop will help in the preparation of a final report which will provide more detail on DP activities by country and by activity. Both the workshop and the report should help to configure thematic networks which function as effective tools for overcoming the many barriers to mainstreaming that have existed in the past.

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THEME 2D: ENTREPRENEURSHIP - SOCIAL ECONOMY

"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"

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

1.1. THIS DOCUMENT

This document aims to be a starting point for discussion at the Barcelona conference, and to suggest some promising areas for work by the European Thematic Groups.

It discusses the definition of "social economy", and traces the development of EU policy for the sector and the definition of theme 2D within Equal. It then gives a short statistical analysis of the development partnerships selected for action 1, and analyses their objectives and proposed activities. These approaches are grouped into clusters and compared to the CIP objectives. The report also examines approaches taken to mainstreaming and to the horizontal issues of empowerment and gender.

1.2. THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

The social economy, also often known as the third sector or third system, is a sector of organisations defined by their organisational form, rather than by their activities. The concept varies between countries, being most coherent in France, Spain and Belgium. It is normally taken to have four components: co-operatives, mutuals, voluntary organisations (associations) and foundations for the public benefit. In developed economies, these organisations account for around 6% of economic activity and employment. The 1.3 million social economy organisations in the EU provide 8.9 million full-time equivalent jobs, 6.6% of civilian employment.⁴

The principles that are common to the different components of the social economy are that they are based on meeting the needs of people, rather than on bringing an economic return on investment. In detail, the principles governing each family within the social economy vary.

Co-operatives, which are found in most sectors of the economy, define themselves as being "autonomous association[s] of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise."⁵ They espouse the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, and abide by seven principles:

- Voluntary and open membership (non-discrimination)
- Democratic member control (one member, one vote)
- Member economic participation (usually some common ownership of assets, distribution to members in proportion to transactions with the co-operative)
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Co-operation among co-operatives
- Concern for community

⁴ *The Co-operative, Mutual and Non-Profit Sector in the EU*, European Commission, 1997; *The Enterprises and Organizations of the Third System: a Strategic Challenge for Employment*, CIRIEC, Liège, 2000

⁵ <http://www.coop.org/ica/info/enprinciples.html>

Mutuals are predominantly found in the banking and health insurance sectors, and follow principles akin to those of co-operatives, but with less emphasis on the reciprocity between membership and benefit. In some countries they act as quasi-state health insurers.

Voluntary associations are established to meet a need or achieve a social objective that their members support, and in principle do not trade. Because of their bottom-up nature and close links with the population, they are often able to pilot social services which are later taken up by the state.

The active role of associations in social service provision can be seen to challenge their independence from the state, and to blur the boundary between associations and co-operatives. A hybrid form of multi-stakeholder organisation has sprung up to fill this gap, namely the social co-operative. Italy was the first country to create a separate legal status for social co-operatives, a practice which has been copied by Belgium, France and Portugal.

Theme 2D of the Equal Initiative is defined as: *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.* Activities within this theme take place within a range of economic sectors (for instance recycling). 'Social economy' should not be equated with 'social services', though a large number of DPs combine the two.

1.3. EU POLICY FOR THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

Between 1989 and 2000 the European Commission's Social Economy Unit carried out much important work in raising awareness of the social economy in Europe. This was done through statistical analyses, support for networking, pilot projects and exchanges of good practice. This work contributed towards the increasing recognition at Member State level during the last decade for the concept of the social economy, for its importance and for its potential.

Co-operatives, mutuals, associations and foundations are dynamic, competitive and successful enterprises which employ 9 million Europeans and provide a wide variety of goods and services. However, their particular potential for creating sustainable jobs in growth sectors and for social integration has also been recognised. Therefore, for policy purposes, the social economy should not be treated exclusively as a type of business, or exclusively as an employment creation tool. It is both. Responsibility for the social economy within the Commission has therefore been divided, since 2000, between the Enterprise DG, which deals with its "enterprise aspects", and the Employment and Social Affairs DG, which is interested more in its social and employment aspects. Of course the social economy is also relevant to a wide variety of other policy areas from regional development to competition, and from development to agriculture.

The Enterprise DG has recently conducted an analysis of the co-operative sector in Europe with a view to identifying important regulatory issues and discussing the ways in which co-operative enterprises may assist in achieving Community objectives.⁶ This should result in a Communication on Co-operatives later in 2002. This year will also see the launch of a similar exercise concerning the mutual sector. The priorities of the Enterprise DG in the near future are to ensure the adoption of legal instruments for the cross-border activities of co-operatives, mutuals and associations,⁷ and to encourage further exchanges of good practice amongst Member State officials. Much work also needs to be done to improve the statistics available on the social economy in Europe.

The social economy has not been a theme in its own right in previous European Social Fund programmes and Community Initiatives, though social economy organisations have played a major – in cases such as Horizon a predominant – role in their delivery. There have also been a number of action programmes and budget lines targeted at voluntary organisations active in the social and employment field, which have served to build trans-European links, generalise experiences and improve dialogue with the sector. This dialogue has been institutionalised in the Platform of Social NGOs.

⁶ *Co-operatives in Enterprise Europe*,
<http://www.europa/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/coop/consultation/index.htm>

⁷ in the form of Statutes for a European Co-operative Society, European Mutual, and European Association

In the mid-1990s the Commission's Forward Studies Unit carried out research on increasing the job intensiveness of economic growth, and on defining and exploiting the "new sources of jobs" which were springing up in 19 areas related chiefly to personal services, improving the quality of life, culture and new technologies. It became apparent that social economy organisations were, if not synonymous with, then inextricably implicated in the realisation of these "local development and employment initiatives".⁸ The Community Initiative Adapt and Employment took up this work. From 1997-2001 the pilot action *Third System and Employment* supported and studied 81 projects, clustered in the social services, culture and environment sectors, and confirmed both the value of the participative approach, and the needs for attention to quality of service provision and management skills. It concluded⁹ that third sector organisations were very good at inventing new services in response to new social needs. Whilst many of the jobs created were different in nature to existing jobs and thus difficult to compare, in personal and home care, the third sector created jobs of higher quality.

1.4. THE EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The Entrepreneurship pillar of the European Employment Strategy consist of three strands:

- Making it easier to start up and run a business (venture capital, deregulation)
- Exploiting the opportunities for job creation
- Making the taxation system more employment-friendly

The second of these includes this reference to the social economy:

*If the European Union wants to deal successfully with the employment challenge, all possible sources of jobs and new technologies and innovations must be exploited effectively. To that end the Member States will investigate measures to exploit fully the possibilities offered by job creation at local level, in the **social economy** and in new activities linked to needs not yet satisfied by the market, and examine, with the aim of reducing, and obstacles in the way of such measures.*

European Employment Guideline 11 invites Member States to:

*promote measures to enhance the competitive development and job creation capacity of the **social economy**, especially the provision of goods and services linked to needs not yet satisfied by the market, and examine, with the aim reducing, any obstacles to such measures;*

The social economy attracts this attention because of its characteristics of being:

- locally rooted – and hence a good vehicle for local development initiatives
- open and non-discriminatory in membership – and hence of benefit to those at risk of exclusion
- able to balance the interests of different stakeholder groups – and hence be responsive to user needs
- innovative and unbureaucratic in tackling new social problems
- willing and able to make use of a mixed sources of revenue – part earned, part grant in aid – and hence efficient

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

2.1. MEMBER STATE EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PLANS

The National Action Plans for employment make only brief mention of the topic, but in their Equal CIPs, Member States focus on a wide variety of different aspects of social economy activity:

⁸ *Local Development and Employment Initiatives: An Investigation in the European Union*, SEC 564/95

⁹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl/esf/3syst/executivesumm2001_en.pdf

- **Germany** mentions the need to secure jobs in the third sector and improve their quality; to professionalise their products and services; and to promote organisational and staff development.
- **Greece** wants to improve the business environment within which the social economy works and identify sources of new jobs within it, before piloting labour market integration co-operatives;
- **Italy** is looking to promote the sustainability and quality of both enterprises and services through an integrated approach;
- **Portugal** sees the need to modernise and qualify social economy organisations;
- **Spain** wishes to stimulate business co-operation networks as a way of improving the stability and productivity of SMEs;
- **Sweden** intends to raise the degree of social responsibility taken by businesses.
- The **UK** has a strong tradition of partnership with the voluntary and community sector, and notes the great diversity of approaches falling under the social economy umbrella. It sees Equal as an opportunity to clarify the role of the social economy and learn from other countries.

The priorities that Member States have set out in their CIPs for theme 2D can be clustered as follows:

<i>Problem / objective cluster</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Found in these CIPs</i>
Develop clear role in labour market / national strategy / encouraging environment with central & regional support agencies	3	UKgb, FIN, EL
Improve economic strength of social economy enterprises	4	A, I, P, UK
Harness job creation potential of social economy (in particular in local services)	6	A, BEnl, EL, F, NL, S ¹⁰
Skills: professionalise social economy, improve quality of products & services, innovative capacity	6	D, EL, FIN, I, P, UKgb
Demand side: ensure universal access to local services for the public benefit (co-location, affordability)	1	F

The majority of Member States place the emphasis on bolstering management and professional skills within the social economy, so as to raise its capacity to provide jobs and high-quality neighbourhood services. They thus accept that social economy enterprises, as independent businesses, have a role to play in reducing inequalities in the labour market. The more general issues of how they can best be fitted into the labour market system and the care system are of concern to a minority of Member States.

However the priorities are not always consistent across the Member States. This has undoubtedly affected the stated objectives of the DPs presented. In some cases, all or most of one country's DPs are very similar (EL, P, UK). In some cases, DPs which have been accepted within theme 2D seem to be concerned only secondarily with the social economy as generally understood, and to be pursuing a broader objective such as rural development. Equally, in countries such as Sweden, which allocated no budget for theme 2D, DPs with a substantial social economy involvement are to be found in theme 2C, start-ups. Conversely, many 2D DPs will be working on start-ups. As many as 30 DPs in theme 1A (employability – integration) concern the social economy.

¹⁰ Sweden has this objective in theme 2C

2.2. BUDGET

Ten Managing Authorities have allocated a budget to theme 2D, and these vary widely.¹¹ Of the total of €260m of Equal ESF money available, Italy is contributing 38%, while Germany, France and Great Britain are contributing around 14% each.

Italy has selected the largest number of DPs (70, or 42% of the total). France follows with 37 DPs, and Austria with 16. The other countries have less than eight.

The average grant per DP is €1.56 million, but this also varies widely by country: Germany and Great Britain have each chosen to focus on eight DPs with a budget some three times the EU average, while at the other end of the spectrum Austria and Flanders have DPs with a budget one-third of the average.

2.3. STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF DPs SELECTED IN ACTION 1

2.3.1. Type of partnership:

Three-fifths of the DPs are area-based, and two-fifths sector-based. Over half the sectoral partnerships are in services.

Type of partnership		Number of DPs	%
<i>Geographical - 62%</i>	<i>Rural</i>	25	15
	<i>Urban</i>	31	19
	<i>Other</i>	48	29
<i>Sectoral - 38%</i>	<i>Agricultural</i>	1	1
	<i>Services</i>	34	20
	<i>Specific problems</i>	28	17
Total		167	100%

2.3.2. Principal activities:

The DPs intend to make the following their principal activity (as denoted by “++++”), in descending order of frequency:

Impact on persons – %		Impact on structures – %	
<i>Training</i>	47	<i>Conception of training programmes, certification</i>	30
<i>Guidance & counselling</i>	21	<i>Awareness-raising, information, publicity</i>	15
<i>Training at the workplace</i>	10	<i>Guidance & social services</i>	13
<i>Integrated measures (pathway to integration)</i>	10	<i>Work organisation, access to workplaces</i>	11
		<i>Studies & analysis of discrimination</i>	10
<i>Work placement</i>	5	<i>Employment creation & support</i>	10
<i>Aid for employment & self-employment</i>	5	<i>Training of teachers, trainers & staff</i>	8
		<i>Improvement of employment services & recruitment structures</i>	2
		<i>Anticipation of technical change</i>	1
Totals	100		100

The predominant activity is thus training, followed by training design and certification. This fits in with the needs identified in the CIPs to raise management and professional skills, to improve quality and quality assurance mechanisms, and to create better partnerships between social economy organisations and the authorities in planning service provision.

¹¹ Francophone Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden have no budget. The Czech Republic is financing two projects from Phare). See http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/data/attachment/sumtheme_en.pdf

2.3.3. Experience in Adapt & Employment:

Social economy partnerships tend to be slightly less experienced than the average across Equal. Twenty percent of them have only one member who took part in A&E (average for all DPs 15%), 44% have one partner (average 45%), and 36% two or more partners (average 40%). This is evidence that new organisations are being mobilised by Equal under this theme.

2.3.4. Size of partnership:

The average size of the partnerships varies widely by country, from 1 in Finland to 22 in Greece. The modal value is around 7, with six countries (A, BEnI, CZ, F, I, NL, P) falling between 3 and 8, and D and UKgb falling between 16 and 19. This variation is probably the result of differing national policies over the stage of progress expected under Action 1 of Equal.

2.3.5. Types of partner:

The composition of the DPs in theme 2D is similar to those in other priorities, with the major and self-explanatory exception being the tripled share of social economy organisations.

Organisation type	2D number	2D %	All %
Public authority	313	22	22
Other	263	18	14
Social economy enterprise	157	11	4
Education/training organisation	156	11	14
Organisation supporting & guiding disadvantaged groups	139	10	12
Enterprise	121	8	10
Employers' organisation	62	4	5
Social services	62	4	4
University/research organisation	57	4	5
Trade union	44	3	4
Chamber of commerce, industry or crafts	26	2	2
Financial institution	24	2	1
Employment services	17	1	4
Total	1,431	100%	100%

2.4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS CLUSTERED BY WORK AREA

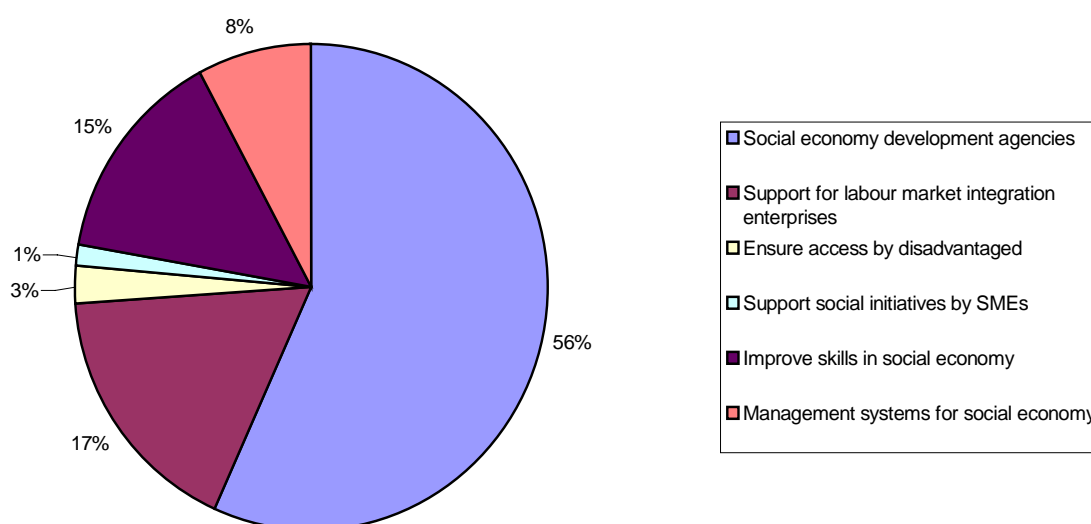
The development partnerships may be divided into the following clusters according to the area of work in which they are principally engaged.¹²

Area of work	Main locations	No	%
Business development agencies, usually regional, to support the start-up and growth of social enterprises		89	56
All social enterprises	IT, UK	19	
Social economy incubators (offering premises, services and advice to start-ups)	IT	6	
Neighbourhood services – urban & unspecified	IT, FR	10	
Rural neighbourhood services	FR	19	
Health and social services, childcare	AT, DE, FR, IT, UK, NL	16	

¹² Information about the composition and intentions of the DPs has been taken from the Equal common database. It is not always possible to be precise about the problems identified or the activities proposed. Some DPs may engage in activities in more than one cluster, and these are allocated to the most appropriate. This version of the analysis concerns a 95% sample of the DPs, only 61 of the 70 Italian DPs being included.

<i>Area of work</i>	<i>Main locations</i>	No	%
Environment, reconditioning & recycling	FI, FR, DE, AT	6	
Immigrants	IT	3	
Tourism, archaeology & cultural industries	IT, FR, AT	10	
Support for labour market integration enterprises	DE, FR, NL, EL, IT	27	17
Ensure access to neighbourhood services for the disadvantaged, e.g. affordability	FR	4	3
Support social initiatives by SMEs	NL, BE	2	1
Improve skills in social economy		23	15
Management training and support for competitiveness	IT, PT, AT	15	
Networks with private companies	IT	3	
Social services training	BE, IT	2	
Animation, community work	FR, UK	3	
Management systems for social economy	IT, DE, AT	12	8
Unknown (insufficient data)	FR	1	1
Total		158	100

DP priorities - detailed



PROBLEMS BEING ADDRESSED

It will be seen that three-quarters (73%) of the DPs plan to offer **direct support to social economy enterprises**. These have been grouped into two major clusters: social economy

development agencies of a more **generic** sort (56%) and those focusing on **labour market integration enterprises** (17%). Within both these categories, a majority of DPs have more specific targets, be they to establish or aid businesses in a certain business field (such as social or environmental services), or to help certain types of client (such as women, young people or disabled people). Most cover a county, province or region, although some are national in scope.

Various DPs give a flavour of the problems being addressed in this development work. The most typical social economy businesses, Italy's social co-operatives, are multi-stakeholder co-operatives that include service beneficiaries, services providers and volunteers as members. They are of two legally defined types. Type A provide social services such as personal care, while Type B are labour market integration enterprises (at least 30% of their members must be disadvantaged). The country's 4,000+ social co-operatives employ over 100,000 paid workers, of whom 18,000 are handicapped.

One DP points out the need for social co-operatives of both types – A and B – to modernise themselves to comply with recent regulations. They need to stop trying to survive in business by delivering services at low cost. Instead, they need to develop the know-how needed to play a part in planning social policies. They need to be part of territorial networks of multi-stakeholder businesses. They need to adopt a quality-oriented attitude. This requires them to provide themselves with service assessment tools by which to measure their success, and with social reporting systems through which to hold themselves accountable to the general public.

The DP highlights the particularly vulnerable situation of the Type B social co-operatives. They depend largely on public sector markets for jobs in areas such as garden maintenance, cleaning in institutions, managing parking or school buses. They are allocated contracts without tender, because they produce a social benefit, but if required to compete commercially could not do so. They have no links with local businesses, and so are unable to benefit from trading with them and starting joint ventures. In order to compensate for this isolation, the DP believes that it is necessary to build a general connection with the conventional business community.

Another DP points out that undercapitalised social co-ops established by unskilled people in a top-down manner lack management education and the skills to plan or collaborate with each other or with the authorities. Yet another describes a situation where social service providers are "suffocated" by administrative procedures and left in a "schizophrenic" state, unable to meet users' needs satisfactorily. Their solution is to integrate health and social services and overcome the conflict between public and private sectors which results from cost reduction being the primary objective in contracting out.

2.5. POLICY GAPS

The DPs provide a good response to two of the objectives set out in the CIPs (see 2.1 above):

- The predominant **social economy development agencies** and more specific **labour market integration enterprises** clusters (116 DPs taken together) respond to two objectives: *Improve **economic strength** of social economy enterprises (A, I, P, UK)* and *Harness **job creation** potential of social economy (in particular in local services) (A, BEnI, EL, F, NL, S)*. This latter objective corresponds to that expressed in the NAPs of 12 Member States to create jobs in services, the environment and the knowledge society.
- The **improve skills** and **management systems** clusters (35 DPs) respond to the objective **Skills: professionalise social economy, improve quality of products & services, innovative capacity** (D, EL, FIN, I, P, UKgb)

However the other two objectives of the CIPs are less well served:

- The **access** cluster (4 DPs) responds in part to the objective **Demand side: ensure universal access to local services for the public benefit (co-location, affordability)** (F)
- The **influencing SMEs** cluster (2 DPs) responds partially to the objective *Develop clear role in **labour market** / national strategy / encouraging environment with central & regional support agencies* (UKgb, FIN, EL)

The DPs in this theme are overwhelmingly at local or regional scale, and thus help to strengthen the **regional and local development** approach to entrepreneurship. As for the remaining objectives set out in the 2001 National Action Plans for entrepreneurship, we may mention the following:

- **Combating undeclared work:** Though 12 Member States set this as an objective in their NAPs for 2001, it is mentioned by very few DPs (IT-CAM-109, IT-LAZ-057).
- **Improving access to finance** is an objective set in seven of the 2001 NAPs, and is a particular problem for social economy enterprises, which do not issue conventional equity capital. Yet surprisingly few DPs have been able to bring financial institutions into their partnership. One approach to financing neighbourhood services is that taken by a Flemish DP, Regie Nabijheidsdiensten (BEnl-01/EQ/2.D/005). They plan to set up two funds: a solidarity fund to support demand (by cross-subsidy from richer to poorer clients) and a work fund to support supply by pooling subsidies received to pay wages. One of the partners is a community development finance institution, Hefboom. CDFIs are also partners in UK-55 and UK-56. Banks are partners in two Italian DPs (IT-BAS-013 and IT-CAM-018), and mutuals in FR-11065 and FR-11127. The Greek project Dione II (GR-200895) aims to set up a micro-credit bank for women.
- A small number of DPs make reference to the use of **information and communication technologies**, but this is normally in the sense of modernising management systems, rather than reducing burdens on business.
- The opportunities that the DPs offer to their target beneficiaries will stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour, and their activities will demonstrate more broadly the possibilities of social entrepreneurship. However very few DPs explicitly aim to influence **popular culture** in the direction of becoming more entrepreneurial.

2.6. ACTIVITIES NOT INCLUDED IN THE RELEVANT CIP

Other activities relate either to objectives falling under other priorities of the relevant CIP, or nowhere in the CIP. There is a lot of overlap, in particular, between theme 2D and 2C (start-up support) and to a lesser extent 1A (employability – reintegration).

- **Rural local development:** is a major goal of many of the DPs (particularly in France).
- **Regional inequalities:** One DP aims to decrease inequalities between the old and new Länder of Germany (Second Chance, DE-EA-64929)

2.7. MAINSTREAMING APPROACHES BEING TESTED BY DPs

Mainstreaming has two components: horizontal (sharing of practical approaches among operational partners) and vertical (influencing the policymaking process). Very few DPs mention mainstreaming as such, though a significant number plan to disseminate their results in one way or another. A significant number of DPs have made provision for horizontal mainstreaming by involving businesses, chambers of commerce and industry and trade unions in the partnership. A larger number intend to **publish** their results, in some cases by means of a website. Some plan to hold conferences or other public **events**, or to establish permanent regional or local **forums** of the social economy. However very few mention the **lobbying** of policy-makers. Some of the publishable results have the potential to structure the sector in the future, for instance those establishing benchmarking systems (Best 3S, DE-EA-34848) or evaluation tools (Format, IT-CAL-026).

Mainstreaming, like implementation, depends on partnership, and much of the most effective mainstreaming activity will be that carried out not by the DPs, but by the Member States and the European Commission. This might include proposals for legislation (along the lines of the existing power of Member States to reduce the rate of VAT applying to labour intensive services) and the sponsorship of conferences and other visibility campaigns. Perhaps most influential

mainstreaming action will be the incorporation of lessons from Equal into future iterations of the European Employment Strategy.

2.8. HORIZONTAL THEMES

2.8.1. Empowerment

Within the previous Community Initiatives, ADAPT and Employment, a Thematic Focus Group articulated the concept of empowerment as consisting of four strands:¹³

Empowering disadvantaged people means involving them in a process which develops their:

- **social** power (*access to information, knowledge, ability to participate in social organisations*)
- **citizenship** power (*direct involvement in decision-making and the acquisition of a collective voice*)
- **economic** power (*having a job, and also the direct ownership or management of land, property, capital, technology and skills*)
- **psychological** power (*self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, strength in social interaction*).

The majority of DPs in the theme plan to support the development of social economy businesses. By their participative nature, these businesses will contribute to the empowerment of the people managing and working in them. At the same time their success will depend on these people's empowerment. A minority of DPs make explicit mention of empowerment, and those that do refer in the main to the empowering effect of participative management,

2.8.2. Gender awareness

A significant number of DPs are conscious that women make up the majority of members of many social economy enterprises, especially those offering care services, whether of children or of the elderly. A small number of the DPs are explicitly targeting women entrepreneurs (e.g. GR-201007) and others are active in areas that will affect women predominantly (e.g. UKgb-24). Some DPs mention the need to take the reconciliation of family and working life into account in work organisation. One DP is to offer gender training to all participants.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

The DPs selected in theme 2D provide a significant opportunity to experiment with and learn from work done in promoting social economy enterprises, especially those providing neighbourhood services.

It may be that the issue concerning the greatest number of the development partnerships would be how best to **upgrade strategic management skills** among social economy enterprises. This would enable them to work with public authorities in taking a long view of the social needs to be met, and in developing appropriate standards and delivery mechanisms. It is also a condition of ensuring their financial stability.

It is likely that a number of more specific issues will arise during the implementation phase, which thematic networks could usefully consider. Some of these might be:

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Aspects</i>
Common criteria for social economy	Performance indicators / social audit / benchmarking / evaluation

¹³ From *Initiative No. 1*, at http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/ae.cfm?file=detart.cfm&nav_id_menu=77&art_id=10134&lang_id=5

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Aspects</i>
Business environment	What is an integrated approach to the sector? Service vouchers to stimulate demand Benefit eligibility rules for LETS ¹⁴ participants: at what point does an exchange of services become an occupation which disqualifies from unemployment benefit, and attracts tax? Public procurement / social clauses / fair competition / corporate social responsibility. How to take relational quality of social economy service providers into account in competitive bidding
Professionalisation	Participative management – training & accreditation Job quality / collective agreements Quality labels / professional standards in social care / branding in social care Local needs audits and capacity audits
Finance	Relationship with mutuals and with conventional lenders Contracting out of public services / continuity of income / hybrid finance Collective approaches such as mutual guarantee societies Is association status a handicap to trading?

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE BARCELONA WORKSHOP

The theme of the social economy is treated very briefly and generally in the 2001 National Action Plans for employment and in the Community Initiative Plans for Equal. This seems to indicate that there is no very developed shared understanding of what the social economy is, or what its role in Equal should be – indeed three Member States indicate in their CIPs that they wish to improve this understanding. This suggests that the initial workshop to be held in Barcelona should address quite basic questions, so as to build some consensus, and open up options for future work. Some relevant topics might be structured as follows:

- **What is special about the social economy in relation to reducing discrimination in the labour market?**
 - the result of private not public initiative?
 - public sector role is to facilitate rather than implement?
 - driven by local not central initiative?
 - 'awkward' because crosses administrative boundaries?
- **What are the necessary conditions for DPs in the social economy to play a useful role in modernising employment creation and social policy?**
 - funding mix?
 - secure legal status?
 - solvent demand?
 - management capability?
 - movements, networks and support structures?
- **What can we expect the contributions of the social economy DPs to be?**
 - user involvement and feedback?
 - responsiveness, flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness?
 - fast response to changed circumstances and new needs?
 - enthusiasm in inventing and piloting new services?
- **What are the most relevant issues for the European Thematic Groups to consider during the Equal programme?**

¹⁴ Local exchange and trading schemes, or barter groups

- where would we like to be five years from now? What can we hope to achieve in this field during the Equal programme?
- what new organisations will exist? What new roles will they be playing? Who will be benefiting? What will be most difficult to get right?
- what tangible products (handbooks, quality systems, management tools, qualifications ...) could we publish, publicise, translate ...?
- what policy issues should we take up, at what levels?
- to what extent are common quality standards, labels, brands a realistic proposition?

THEME 3E: ADAPTABILITY - LIFELONG LEARNING

«Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market.»

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to inform discussion at the workshops to be held in Barcelona on May 17th concerning the promotion of exchange and experience and dissemination of innovation practice. The focus is on theme E.

The EQUAL Adaptability theme E : lifelong learning originates back to Pillar III of the EES Guidelines : - Encouraging Adaptability of Business and their Employees :

The opportunities created by the knowledge-based economy and the prospect of an improved level and quality of employment requires a consequent adaptation of work organisation and the contribution to the implementation of lifelong learning strategies by all actors including enterprises, in order to meet the needs of workers and employers.

The two main headings within this Pillar are :

- Modernising work organisation
- **Supporting adaptability in enterprises as a component of lifelong learning**

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE THEME

Lifelong learning was a central element of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, the previous Community Initiative Programmes covering human resource issues. About 300 ADAPT projects were directly concerned with the planning, development and delivery of lifelong learning. Most of these were working with SMEs. Many were concerned with the opportunities and challenges of the information society and have explored issues such as:

- Individual employability and enhancing competitiveness in firms.
- The wide range of potential co-operation, and the wide variety of potential partners.
- Using ICTs to provide flexible access to and delivery of learning.
- The new types of skills needed by businesses as a result of the widespread use of ICTs and how to assess and address them.
- Strategies to convince SME managers of the need for continuous development and lifelong learning.

Similarly, many EMPLOYMENT projects were concerned to improve the delivery of lifelong training to vulnerable groups. Approaches included:

- Developing new pathways to qualifications eg through new literacy programmes, and language and computer skills modules.
- Creating new further training qualifications to extend the skills of trainers to deal with special needs groups, developing tools to assess and accredit existing skills.

- Initiating new flexible, learner-oriented and experience-based learning programmes combining strong motivational elements with skill development.
- Diversifying vocational choices, and identifying and offering training in future-oriented professions.

Lifelong learning implies balancing the short-, medium- and long term learning needs of people. For example, employees have immediate and direct learning needs associated with the specific tasks of their current jobs. However, the traditional concept of a 'job for life' with once-off training that would last a lifetime is less relevant in the current and future world of work. Recent changes in working life and organisations imply 'employability for life' whereby people continually develop their skills to meet the changing work environment. Both employees, employers, partners and providers need to understand, and feel comfortable with, the reasons for and implications of lifelong learning.

1.3. KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AT EU LEVEL

The debate at EU level incorporates a number of dimensions :

- The European Employment Strategy (EES)
- Industrial relations and change
- Lifelong learning and eLearning
- Poverty and social exclusion

The table below summarises these policies :

EES	<p>Key issues for the Lifelong Learning (LLL) part of Pillar III as set out in the Joint Employment Report 2001 are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive LLL strategies are in place in about half of the Member States ▪ Such strategies remain at an early stage of implementation ▪ Degree of coordination and synergy between the competent Ministries is an issue ▪ Development of basic skills remains a topic of widespread concern ▪ Comprehensive approaches to older workers are required to prevent early exit from the labour market ▪ There is scope for further involvement of social partners in LLL measures ▪ Strengthening the local dimension of the EES should be encouraged
Industrial relations and change	<p>Recent report of the High Level Group on Industrial Relations in the EU (2002) concluded that a new agenda for industrial relations should be developed at all levels. There are three main general issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is necessary to enhance the interaction between European industrial relations and national and local level actions: ▪ The interaction between bipartite and tripartite processes at European level should also be encouraged by enhancing both processes ▪ The interaction between the sectoral and inter-professional levels should be recognized <p>Issues relating to LLL are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ European level is particularly well placed to enhance the possibilities for LLL and competence building. ▪ Need to define more precisely how to share this investment between companies, workers and public authorities according to the different circumstances. ▪ New practices in industrial relations that have fostered LLL include personnel development plans ; employability agreements ; sabbatical and training leave ; savings accounts for training and education.
Lifelong Learning (November)	<p>One of the goals of the EU is to establish a European area of lifelong learning which will include the consolidation of a lifelong learning framework. A summary of priorities is :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Valuing learning

2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information, guidance and counselling ▪ Investing time and money in learning ▪ Bringing learning and learners closer together ▪ Basic skills ▪ Innovative pedagogy <p>This initiative will develop in cooperation with the EES (focusing on the employment aspects of LLL) and Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, and Youth.</p>
E-Learning	<p>The eLearning initiative aims to speed up the deployment of a high quality infrastructure at a reasonable cost ; to step up training and overall digital literacy ; and to strengthen cooperation and links at all levels – local, regional, national and European – between all sectors involved, from schools and training colleges to equipment, content and service providers. A number of targets have been set including : <i>offering every worker the opportunity to become digitally literate through the lifelong learning system, by the end of 2003.</i></p>
Poverty and social exclusion (Council, Oct 2000)	<p>EU objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion recognise that employment is the best safeguard against social exclusion. The role of LLL in facilitating participation in employment is cited as one objective :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To prevent the exclusion of people from work by improving employability, through human resource management, organisation of work, and lifelong learning.

1.4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

There are clear opportunities to develop the relationship between theme E and the wider European policy agenda. The key policy areas are outlined above but they are by no means the only policy areas that should be explored. Part of the work of this thematic group is to explore other opportunities particularly as the work of the Development Partnerships (DPs) evolve.

The policy context provides a set of directions and priorities that can support the work of the DPs in this theme, as well as the avenues to channel policy lessons and results from DPs' work.

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

2.1. DPs FUNDED UNDER THEME E

There are 231 DPs funded under theme E, ranging from 3 in Flemish-speaking Belgium to 80 in Italy. No DPs were funded under this theme in Spain, Finland, Luxembourg, and Northern Ireland in the UK. Figure 1 below shows the number of DPs by each Member State.

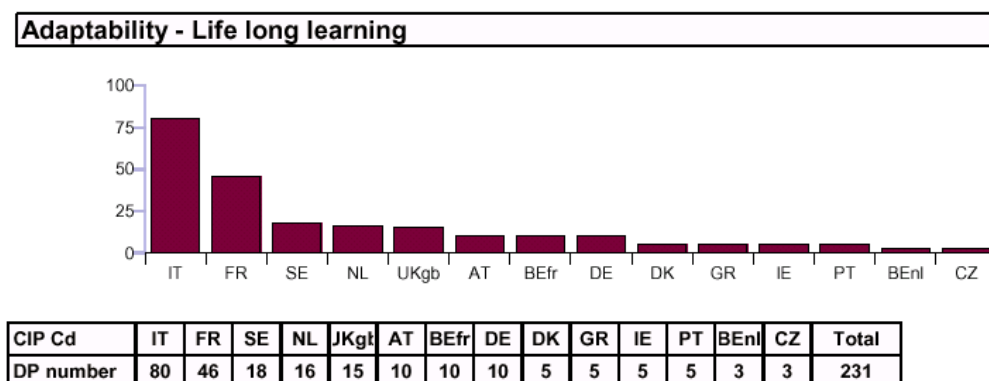


Figure 1: Number of Development Partnerships by Country

2.2. PRIORITY CLUSTERS

The priorities stated by the Development Partnerships have been clustered into seven categories. It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore a DP could fall into more than one of the categories.

1. **Increasing Basic Skills Levels** - This includes literacy and numeracy schemes to aid access to the labour market. It also covers actions aimed at increasing basic ICT skills.
2. **Designing New Learning/ Accreditation of Learning** - This includes the design and development of new qualifications, the accreditation of prior learning, and the development of innovative pedagogy eg intergenerational learning and interactive eLearning.
3. **Providing Support Services** - Examples of actions under this category include mentoring (and training for mentors), outreach work, providing access to information and information technologies, citizenship schemes, motivational and confidence building work with non-traditional learners, support for transitions from learning to the workplace, work on the retention of labour, counselling services and the creation of learner networks.
4. **Developing Innovative Working Arrangements** - This includes cultural and organisational change (especially with reference to SMEs), working time issues, capacity building, improving competitiveness, flexible working arrangements, teleworking, job rotation and secondments.
5. **Undertaking Research** - This includes skills audits, observatories and forecasts, work to understand discrimination and target group and SME needs, projects for predicting future needs.
6. **Developing Businesses and Individuals (Sectors)** - Schemes aimed at a specific sector to help with training and increasing employability of workers perhaps affected by structural economic change. This includes upskilling within the sector or equipping workers with skills to enable them to move out of the sector.
7. **Developing Businesses and Individuals (Regions)** - Schemes working closely with individuals and SMEs aimed at a specific area (up to regional level) perhaps affected by structural economic change.

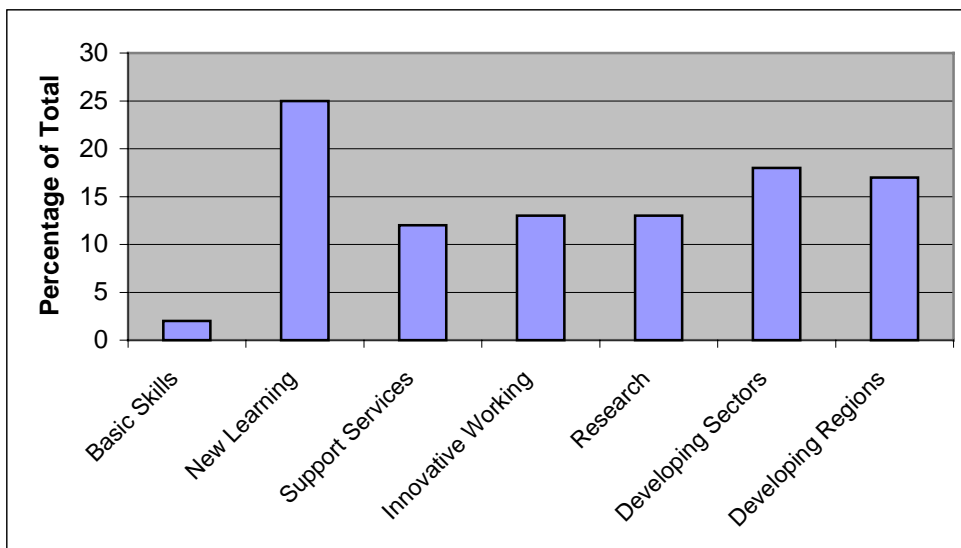
These categories are mirrored by the priorities in the Member States CIPs. Activities undertaken by DPs can therefore be plotted against activities listed in the CIPs. This can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: CIP Priorities against DP Priorities

Category	Number of Countries based on CIP Priorities	Number of Countries based on DP Priorities
Increasing Basic Skills Levels	4	2
Designing New Learning/ Accreditation of Learning	11	13
Providing Support Services	5	11
Developing Innovative Working Arrangements	11	9
Undertaking Research	5	7
Developing Businesses and Individuals (Sectors)	1	10
Developing Businesses and Individuals (Regions)	0	6

Activity undertaken by DPs can be clustered within the seven categories outlined above. This can be seen in Figure 3.

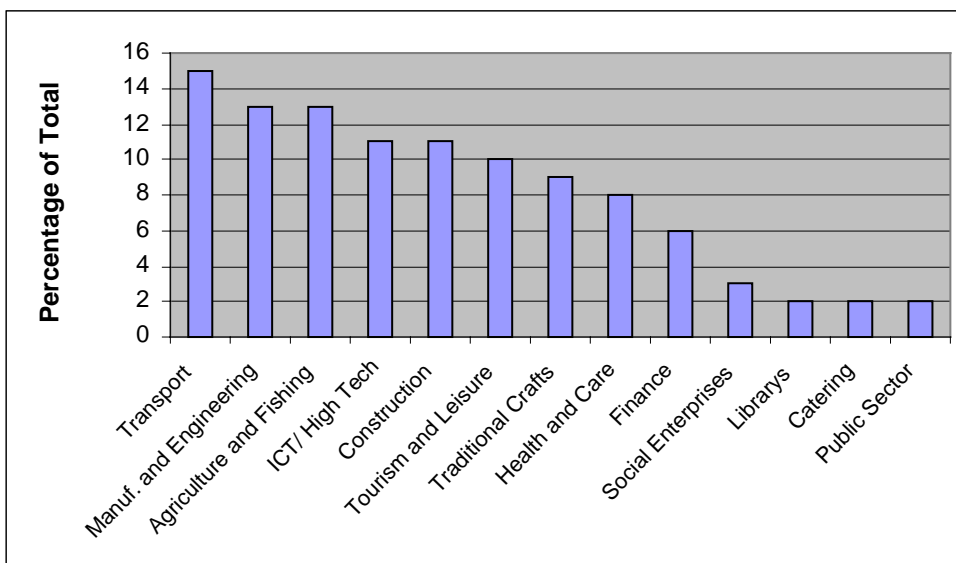
Figure 3: DPs by Category



25% of DPs activities made reference to designing new learning or the accreditation of prior learning, the next most frequent activities mentioned had either a specific sectoral or geographic focus (18% and 17% respectively.) The category least frequently mentioned by the DPs is improving basic skills.

Of all DPs under theme E 18% targeted their activities at a specific economic sector. This can be seen by sector in Figure 4.

Figure 4: DPs by Target Sector

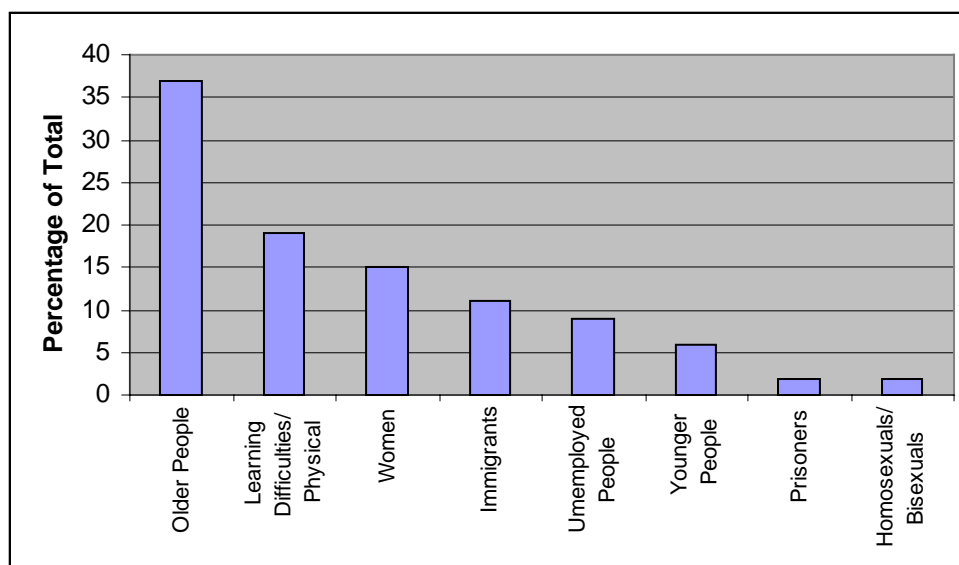


The sectors mentioned most frequently are well established sectors such as transport (15%), manufacturing and engineering (13%) and agriculture and fishing (13%). Countries with a strong focus on specific sectors were Denmark (31% of DPs had a sectoral focus), the Netherlands (23%) and Sweden (23%).

113 (49%) of the DPs proposed to work with specific sub groups of the population. Again it should be noted that some DPs planned to target more than one of these subgroups.

Figure 5 shows the DPs broken down by the group of people targeted. As can be seen, the most commonly targeted group under this theme were older people (37%) and people with either learning difficulties or physical disability (19%).

Figure 5: DPs by Target Group



2.3. PARTNERSHIPS

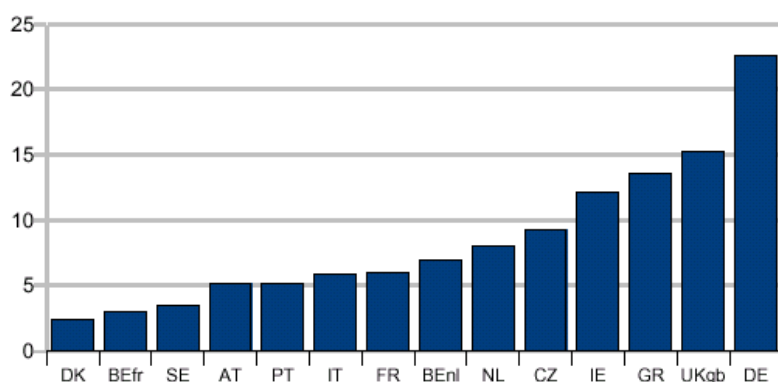
A total of 1690 partners are involved in the Development Partnerships funded under theme E. The groups with the largest representation in DPs are education and training organisation, accounting for around a fifth of all partners involved in theme E, followed by public authorities. Businesses and their representative organisations also form a relatively large share of all partners involved in theme E DPs.

Figure 6 : Partners by type of organisation

Organisation Type (all partners)	Partner number	%
Education/training organisations	331	19%
Public authorities (national, regional, local)	289	17%
Other	260	15%
Enterprise	240	14%
Employers Organisation	116	7%
University/Research organisation	120	7%
Organisation providing support and guidance for disadvantaged groups	84	5%
Trade Union	61	4%
Chamber of Commerce/industry/crafts	59	4%
Employment Services	31	2%
Social Services	39	2%
Financial Institution	29	2%
Social Economy Enterprise	31	2%
Total	1690	100%

The size of development partnerships differed across countries (Figure 7). In Denmark, Flemish speaking Belgium and Sweden DPs involved on average less than five partners. German DPs on the other hand showed the biggest partnerships including more than 20 partners on average.

Figure 7 : Average number of partners per country



2.4. MAINSTREAMING ACTIVITIES

The most common approach to mainstreaming cited by the DPs was dissemination, including activities, such as conferences, workshops, web-based information. Some DPs saw the involvement of decision makers, for example national agencies, as key to mainstreaming.

Other ways of mainstreaming were also anticipated to occur through the development of new materials, or standard as part of the DP's activities. For example:

- Sector jobs agencies
- Skills observatories
- E-learning modules
- National Kitemark for inclusive employment policies

2.5. TRANSVERSAL THEMES

A common horizontal theme across all CIPs was the promotion of the use of information and communication technologies. Other horizontal themes were equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming in particular and fight against racism. About half of DPs made general references to horizontal themes.

2.6. SUMMARY

The topics that appear to be of greatest interest from the DP analysis are:

- Designing new learning (for particular vocational areas), increasing the recognition and transferability of skills, and also assuring quality (through accreditation) and encouraging non-traditional learners to participate. Intergenerational learning is identified by DPs in this topic. Those doing the training are a significant focus.
- Providing support services both to learners (in training and in work) and to SMEs
- Developing innovative working arrangements including cultural and organisational change (especially with reference to SMEs) and a number of more specific measures such as job rotation. The role of social partnership in these activities is cited by DPs.

The application of ICT to facilitate the activities under these topics is widespread in DPs. Our work nevertheless needs to focus on specific activities particular on interactive eLearning providing that this can help those experiencing disadvantage and discrimination in the labour market. The DPs in the theme focus particularly on older people and people with disabilities. The sectoral emphasis is greater than the regional emphasis in Theme E.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE EUROPEAN THEMATIC NETWORKS

3.1. MAINSTREAMING, DISSEMINATION AND ENCOURAGING INNOVATION

In our thematic group we can develop ways of exchanging the experiences from EQUAL, for example :

- Mainstreaming results directly into policy development
- Disseminating results to a wider audience including practitioners
- Exchange of good practice (emphasising the specific circumstances)
- Encouraging and simulating innovation especially targeted at SMEs
- Creating benchmarking groups of DPs on particular topics
- Creating forums for mainstreaming and/dissemination
- Awarding *Beacon* status and responsibilities for mentoring
- Intervening to generate interest across particular clusters e.g. through specific supply chains at sector level, regional or pan-regional, through intermediaries e.g. trade associations, social partners
- Mapping and scoring innovation across SME territory
- Identifying realistic role models for SMEs and other partners in terms of achieving innovation
- The use of ICT in mainstreaming, dissemination and encouraging innovation is critical to the work of EQUAL and will be examined closely for lessons and good practices.

3.2. SCOPE OF THEMATIC WORK

There is potential for DPs to influence decisions, processes and procedures at all levels of policy making – national (member state), regional, local and sub-local (neighbourhoods, estates, communities).

Entry points for mainstreaming and dissemination vary. They include - not only government, companies and social partners - but also learners, communities and families, schools, learning providers, regional and sectoral bodies, development partnerships, trade associations and business links, other intermediaries and networks.

Learning from EQUAL should span the work of DPs. Lessons and good practices can cover strategic and operational matters such as quality of partnerships, management and evaluation as well as final outcomes and results.

Timescale of thematic work is critical particularly where findings from EQUAL are required to feed into policy decisions and/or dissemination opportunities.

Nevertheless, our early work in thematic groups needs to be clear about where EQUAL themes can be complementary to existing initiatives and where clear value can be added. Potential to add value exists under a number of headings, for example :

Company and SME involvement

Theme E provides the opportunity to explore how companies, and SMEs in particular, have benefited from the introduction and development of lifelong learning. The contribution of partnership - its membership and inputs, will influence LLL progress. The role that ICT has played in this development as a trigger or incentive can be explored. DPs provide the means to examine what aspects of partnership can lead to successful outcomes for SMEs; and what criteria are used by SMEs to determine results and good practices.

Social partnership

The potential for social partnership to innovate is highlighted in the table above. Our thematic work provides the opportunity to target the DPs that are piloting new industrial relations processes in the lifelong learning field, and mainstream the results. Different approaches have the capacity to achieve different ends in terms of who shares the costs of investing in lifelong

learning (companies, workers, public authorities) and how partnership can encourage or facilitate sharing. DPs can highlight the benefits of particular agreements, plans and measures ; the more specific these are, the easier it is to point to innovation. These DPs will also be examining what works, and why. The criteria used for these judgements (by social partners) will help to inform mainstreaming.

The content and focus of LLL including the role of ICT

A priority for LLL policies is to encourage people who are not used to learning to take part. Key activities are : basic and key skills training ; eLearning ; learner support in training and in work ; training the trainers in state of the art methods of teaching ; accreditation and quality. The use of ICT in improving access to and delivering learning is a key issue. DPs provide the opportunity to mainstream the results of actions and their impact on people not used to learning and not able to participate in the labour market. EQUAL's competence in this area can provide a strong complement to other EU policies. Older workers make up a group of particular concern as governments in particular would like to reverse the trend of their early exit from the labour market.

Geographical and sectoral benefits

Lessons from DPs can also be mainstreamed from the point of view of their regional/ local and sectoral influence. It cannot be assumed that what works in one environment can be transferred to another. Theme E does however have the potential to transfer lessons about the business benefits of lifelong learning and why SMEs and other development partners need to review skill needs and address shortages. ICT solutions will be significant in these activities and need to be reported.

Developing and using indicators

One of the implications of the EU policy context for the work of EQUAL is to consider reviewing the use of particular indicators on topics where there is clear learning potential. EQUAL could be encouraging the harmonisation of indicators, for particular DPs and particular policies.

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS

The aim of the workshop is to identify the **main topics** for focusing the work of the European Thematic Group under Theme E. We are also interested in identifying the main ideas about how best to mainstream and share good practice.

The **topics** that appear to be of greatest interest from the DP analysis are:

- **Designing new learning (for particular vocational areas), increasing the recognition and transferability of skills, and also assuring quality (through accreditation) and encouraging non-traditional learners to participate. Intergenerational learning is identified by DPs in this topic.**
- **Providing support services both to learners (in training and in work) and to SMEs**
- **Developing innovative working arrangements including cultural and organisational change (especially with reference to SMEs) and a number of more specific measures such as job rotation. The role of social partnership in these activities is cited by DPs.**

The application of ICT to facilitate the activities under these topics is widespread in DPs. Our work nevertheless needs to focus on specific activities particular on interactive eLearning providing that this can help those experiencing disadvantage and discrimination in the labour market. The DPs in the theme focus particularly on older people and people with disabilities. The sectoral emphasis is greater than the regional emphasis in Theme E.

We will be discussing these proposals in the workshop.

Mainstreaming

We are interested in two broad objectives of mainstreaming lessons and good practices:

- helping to identify innovation and lessons to mainstream
- helping to encourage and stimulate innovation and mainstreaming.

4.1. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Partnership and stakeholders

- What role does partnership play in mainstreaming?
- How can partners support mainstreaming?
- What specific partnership factors contribute to successful mainstreaming?
- What are the key mainstreaming roles in a partnership? Are there particular roles for business, government, social partners?
- What are the triggers for encouraging greater SME involvement in innovation and mainstreaming?
- How does the application of ICT support partnership and mainstreaming?

Mechanics of mainstreaming

- What are the different entry points for mainstreaming (e.g. EES)?
- What are the instruments?
- How do you know when you have been successful?

4.2. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS - THEME E

EU policy

- What are the policy priorities at EU level?
- What progress is being made?
- What are the key areas of concern?

Member states

- Do member states share these priorities?
- Which priorities offer the greatest potential for mainstreaming? And why?
- What are the priorities for lifelong learning and inclusion, and how is the need for innovation perceived?
- What is the member state experience in developing a lifelong learning strategy? What have been the key issues: e.g. working across departmental boundaries, complex environment with many learning providers, different sources of financing etc? What would they identify as innovation? What is the potential for mainstreaming? To whom, how?
- What is the member state experience in encouraging non-learners to take part in lifelong learning? What innovation would they like to see?
- What is the member state experience in relation to encouraging SME involvement in lifelong learning – and the role of ICT in triggering greater interest? What innovation would they like to see – how would the good practice be exchanged?

Questions for DPs

- What is the overall plan for mainstreaming as it relates to Theme E.
- From their experience, what is the strength of their partnership in terms of innovation and mainstreaming? What are the specific features of the partnership – its membership, roles and responsibilities, actions etc that will lead to mainstreaming? What are the procedures? How will they assess results? What criteria will they apply to measure if mainstreaming has worked?
- In terms of getting more non-traditional learners into learning, how are they planning to innovate and mainstream the results of their work?
- How do you get SMEs starting training – how do you show them that it is worth their while, how do you get it across to them that it is in their interests to do it?

- What is the particular application of ICT in their DPs – in content for example in interactive learning solutions, or in exchanging experiences and mainstreaming?

THEME 3F: ADAPTABILITY - ADAPTATION TO CHANGE AND ICT

“Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies”

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to inform the discussion at the workshops to be held in Barcelona on May 17th concerning the promotion of exchange and experience and dissemination of innovation practice. The focus is on Theme F.

The EQUAL Adaptability theme F : Adaptation to change and ICT originates in Pillar III of the EES Guidelines : - Encouraging Adaptability of Business and their Employees :

The opportunities created by the knowledge-based economy and the prospect of an improved level and quality of employment requires a consequent adaptation of work organisation and the contribution to the implementation of lifelong learning strategies by all actors including enterprises, in order to meet the needs of workers and employers.

The two main headings within this Pillar are :

- **Modernising work organisation**
- Supporting adaptability in enterprises as a component of lifelong learning

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE THEME

Adaptation to change and ICT was a central element of the ADAPT Programme under the previous round of Community Initiatives. The main challenges covered by the Programme are summarised below.

Companies in particular SMEs, and their workers, need support in anticipating and coping with new requirements imposed by industrial and economic change so that they can maintain or increase their competitive position and thereby increase employment. These challenges include:

- New methods of production, for example, lean production techniques and quality management systems.
- Flexible working, in coping with irregular working patterns, the reduction of working time and reconciling work and family life.
- Meeting the challenges of ICTs and other new technologies.

1.3. KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AT EU LEVEL

The debate at EU level incorporates a number of dimensions :

- The European Employment Strategy (EES)
- Industrial relations and change
- Enterprise
- Corporate Social Responsibility

The table below summarises these policies:

<p>EES</p>	<p>Key issues for the Adaptation to change/ICT part of Pillar III as set out in the Joint Employment Report are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many initiatives covered on working time and flexible forms of work ▪ Little attention to work organisation and quality in work ▪ Little known about social partner actions on work organisation ▪ Policies in member states continued to focus on working time ▪ Trend towards new and flexible forms of work ▪ Other aspects of work organisation tend not to be addressed such as: taking account of new technologies; need to adapt the organisational environment within the enterprise; new management techniques; teamwork; flattening of hierarchies; involvement of employees in decision making; participation in the results of enterprise activities. ▪ Strengthening the local dimension of the EES should be encouraged
<p>Industrial relations</p>	<p>Recent report of the High Level Group on Industrial Relations in the EU (2002) concluded that a new agenda for industrial relations should be developed at all levels. There are three main general issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is necessary to enhance the interaction between European industrial relations and national and local level actions: ▪ The interaction between bipartite and tripartite processes at European level should also be encouraged by enhancing both processes ▪ The interaction between the sectoral and inter-professional levels should be recognized <p>Issues relating to adaptation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How work is organized to meet the challenge of higher levels of employment and better quality of jobs is highly relevant to the industrial relations agenda ▪ New approaches to work organisation and health and safety are needed ▪ More involvement from the social partners to support human friendly forms of work organization is needed ▪ Systems where employees and management collaborate should be fostered ▪ Need to identify best practices that deliver better working conditions and better opportunities ▪ New practices in industrial relations are: new forms of work organisations (learning organisations; project teamwork); human friendly technologies
<p>Enterprise</p>	<p>The EU Enterprise Policy 2000-2005 includes in the work programme the aim of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting innovation and the ability to manage change productively. This involves providing an environment which is supportive to innovation and change. Success depends on using human and intellectual capital to exploit market opportunities: SMEs need particular support given that this element of the economy often have problems in accessing and applying the latest knowledge.
<p>Corporate Social Responsibility</p> <p>(Green Paper, July 2001)</p>	<p>An increasing number of European companies are promoting their corporate social responsibility strategies as a response to a variety of social, environmental and economic pressures. The initiative at EU level is focusing on how to make the most of existing good practice in CSR and to encourage the development of innovative practices: An approach based on the deepening of partnerships in which all actors have a role to play is preferred.</p>

1.4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

There are clear opportunities to develop the relationship between this EQUAL theme and the wider European policy agenda. The key policy areas are outlined above but they are by no means the only policy areas that should be explored, and part of the job of this thematic group is to explore other opportunities particular as the work of the DPs evolves. EU policies on the Information Society for example need to be examined to identify the potential for EQUAL to interact. The EU's Fifth Framework Programme particularly in relation to employment and skills in science may also offer potential. EQUAL's emphasis on inequality in the labour market provides a prime opportunity to mainstream good practices and lessons.

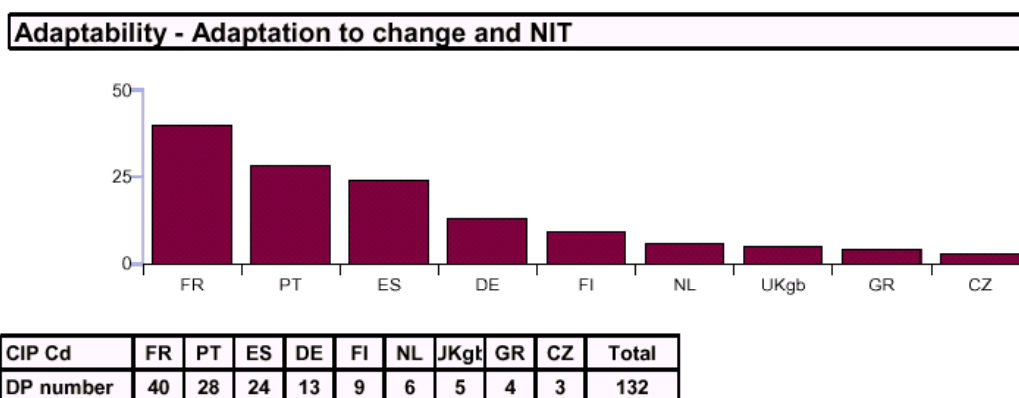
The policy context provides a set of directions and priorities that can support the work of the DPs in this theme, as well as the avenues to channel policy lessons and results from DPs' work.

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

2.1. DPs FUNDED UNDER THEME F

There are 132 DPs funded under Theme F. No DPs were funded under this theme in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Sweden and Northern Ireland in the UK. Figure 1 below shows the number of DPs in each Member State.

Figure 1: Number Development Partnerships by Country



2.2. PRIORITY CLUSTERS

The priorities stated by the Development Partnerships have been grouped into 9 categories, which are also grounded in the context of theme F - Adaptation to change and use of ICT and new technologies. It should be noted that these groups are not mutually exclusive. Consequently, a DP could fall into more than one group. In addition, some DPs carry out a range sub-projects addressing different categories.

- **Skills Development** - Measures which support the development of skills and competences, targeted at employees but also other individuals not necessarily in employment. Activities include training, learning and skills transfer, for example from older to younger people or from skilled to unskilled people. Skills are developed in the technical, management and ICT area.
- **Business development and work organisation** - Measures which support the development of individual businesses with the overall aim to improve competitiveness, innovation or sustainability. Activities can include the development of new processes and products, marketing, changing working practices or improvement of skills. ICT is a key theme.

- **Work organisation and working time**- Activities that address working time issues, flexible methods of working including telework, or work-life balance. Some DPs were not specific, stating that they would address work organisation issues generally.
- **Working Environment and quality of work**- this group addresses the quality of work, working conditions and the well-being of employees. It ranges from activities to improve health and safety to maintenance of employability, for example of older workers.
- **Use of ICT** - There are two aspects to this priority. The first includes activities targeted at individuals to improve their ICT skills, and to address differences in ICT access and use. The second is the use of ICT as a tool to support an overall objective, for example the delivery of training and learning or co-operation between businesses.
- **Retention/Access** - Activities to help individuals access/maintain employment opportunities, for example through training or matching. These could be targeted at specific groups of people, such as the underqualified, unemployed or under-represented.
- **Co-operation** - Activities which support the co-operation of organisations, for example between businesses, between education and businesses or between partners within a region.
- **Supporting structures to anticipate or manage change** - Activities with the aim to put in place an infrastructure that helps to anticipate or manage change. These can be targeted at regions, sectors or individual businesses. Examples include research and analysis into trends within a particular sector, sector promotion, establishment of systems and procedures in businesses, such as in HRM, QA, Marketing. Development Strategies for sectors and businesses.
- **Employee Participation** - Activities which encourage the participation and involvement of employees in the process of change.

These categories are mirrored by the priorities in the country CIPs. Although access to employment is not stated as a priority as such under theme F, it forms part of the overall objective of the EQUAL programme. In addition to the above groups, social responsibility was specified by some countries, but is not presented as prime objective by the Development Partnerships funded under theme F. There is however evidence from some DPs that is included in their activities as a secondary objective.

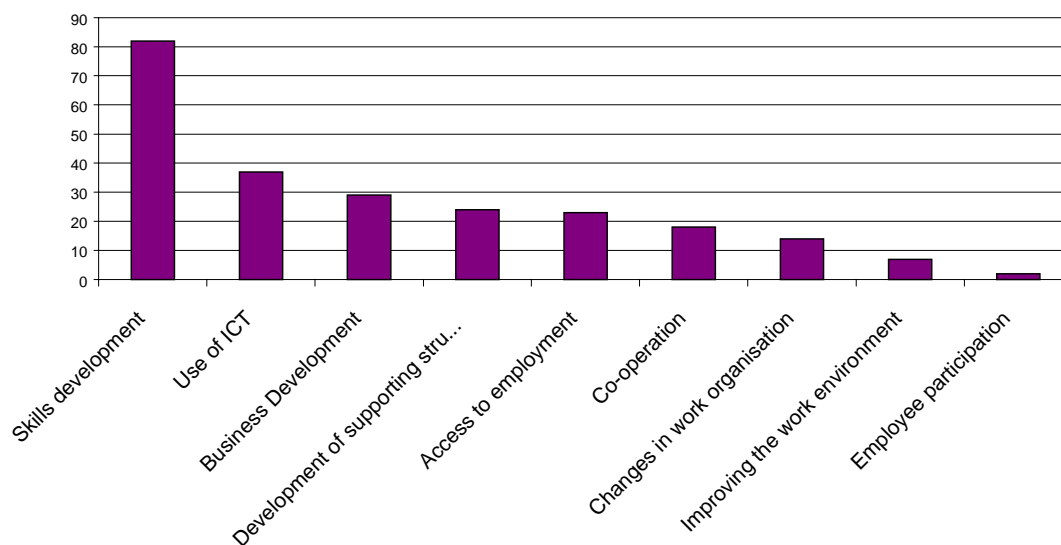
2.2.1. Priorities by country

	Based on CIPs priorities (theme F) No of countries	Based on DP priorities No of countries
Skills development	5	7
Business development and work organisation	3	6
Changes to Work organisation and working time	5	7
Improvement to work environment and quality of work	1	2
Use of ICT	2	3
Co-operation	3	5
Supporting structures	2	6
Employee participation	1	2
Access/Retention	0	6
Social responsibility	1	0

Grouping all DPs funded under theme F into the nine categories provides the following picture. The largest group of DPs proposed to undertake skills development activities (60% of all DPs).

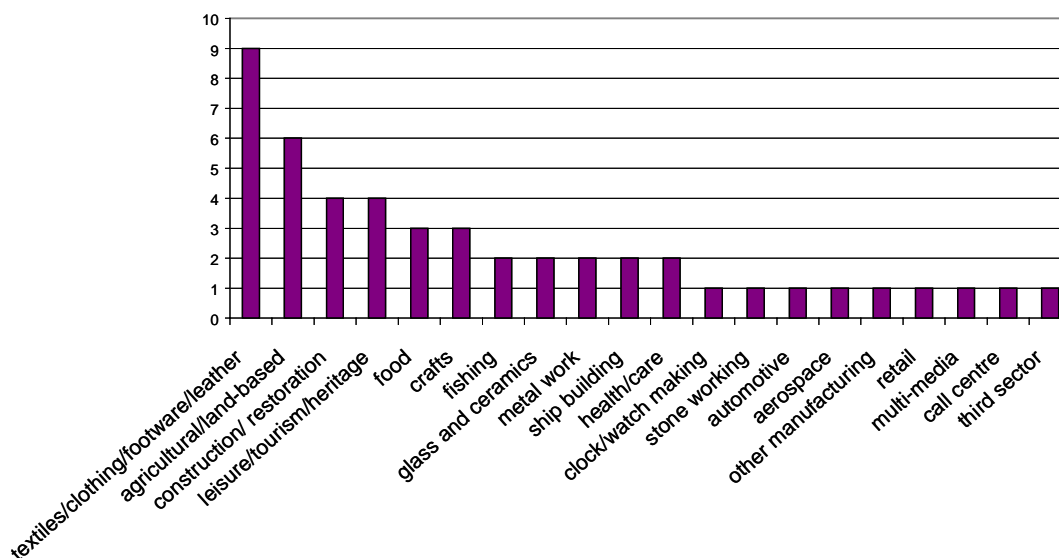
The smallest number of DPs address the employee participation as their main objective. It may however feature as secondary objective in others.

DP priorities



Analysis of the database showed that 58% of DPs within Theme F stated they had a sectoral focus. This included however those focussing on specific discrimination and equality issues. The total proportion of DPs with an agricultural, industrial and services focus is 45%, with the largest proportion targetting the manufacturing sector. France in particular selected the traditional sector, in particular industries with a crafts and heritage focus, and so did many French DPs (but not all). As can be seen from the figure below, many sectors are only represented by single DPs. The sector with the largest number of DPs is textile manufacturing.

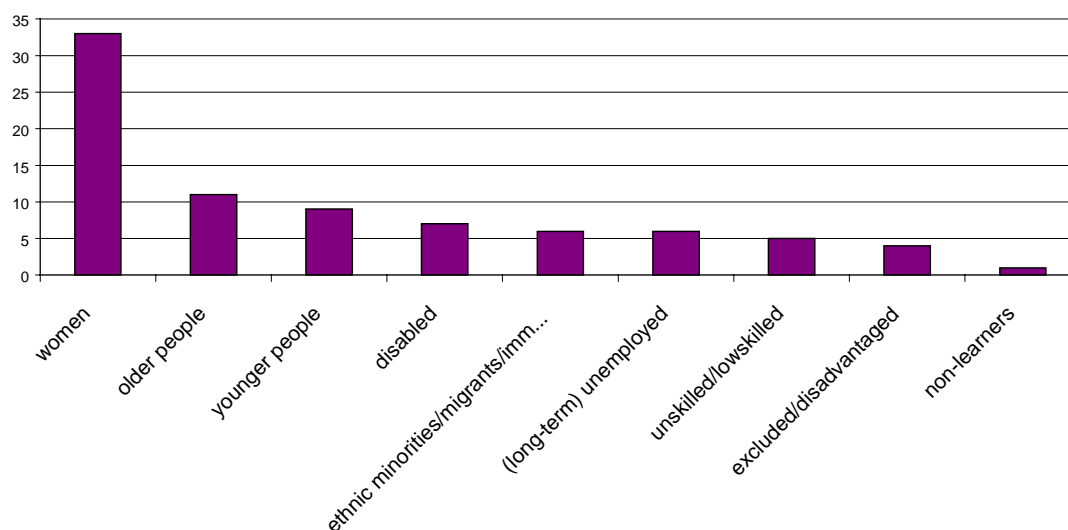
Sectoral Focus



2.2.2. Targetting of sub-groups

A third of all DPs proposed to work with specific sub-groups of the overall population. The figure below shows the type of different groups and how many DPs targeted each sub-group. It should be noted that some DPs plan to work with a range or a combination of these sub-groups. As can be seen more than 30 DPs focus their work on women. The second largest group, however are older people, closely followed by younger people. Only one DP specifically looked at non-learners, although the targetting of unskilled and low-skilled could also imply a focus on non-traditional learners.

Targetting of sub-groups



2.2.3. Partners

A total of 1281 partners are involved in the Development Partnerships funded under theme F. Of these the largest group form public authorities (23% of all partners). This reflects the priority that DPs give to ensuring that decision and policy makers are represented in their partnerships. Businesses and their representative organisations also present a relatively large share of all partners. (Table 2)

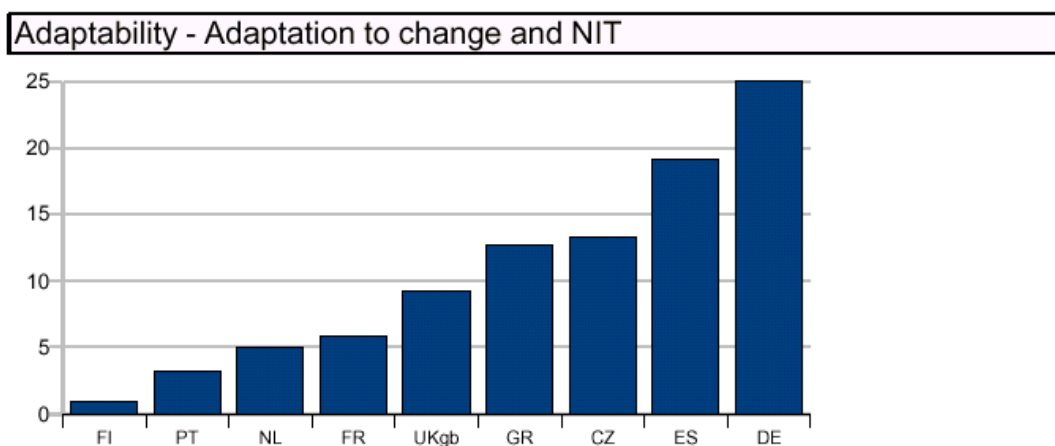
Table 2 : Partners by type of organisation

Organisation Type (all partners)	Partner number	%
Public authority (national, regional, local)	291	22%
Enterprise	183	14%
Education/training organisation	163	13%
Other	142	11%
Organisations providing support and guidance for disadvantaged groups	110	9%
Employers organisation	102	8%
Trade Union	71	6%
University/research organisation	64	5%

Employment Services	47	4%
Social Services	32	3%
Chamber of Commerce/industry/crafts	30	2%
Social economy enterprise	29	2%
Financial Institution	17	1%
Total	1281	100%

The size of development partnerships varied across countries. On average Finnish DPs did not include more than one partner. The largest DPs can be found in Germany, with an average number of 25 partners.

Average number of partners per country



2.3. MAINSTREAMING ACTIVITIES

The activities specified involved dissemination of the results achieved by each DP in various forms. Others suggested that the creation of products, such as a training programme, would lead to mainstreaming.

2.4. TRANSVERSAL THEMES

A common horizontal theme across all CIP was the promotion of the use of information and communication technologies. Other horizontal themes were equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming in particular and fight against racism. Most DPs (around 60%) referred to horizontal themes in general terms.

2.5. SUMMARY

On the basis of the analysis above, the most common priorities are:

- Skills development

This is a very broad cluster. An interesting focus within this could be activities to promote inter-generational learning, which also links with an interest in older workers in Theme F. There is the opportunity to link across to Theme E as older workers are a prime target of many activities.

- Business development

Changing working practices might provide an innovative sub-theme.

- Changes to work organisation

Work-life balance could provide a particular focus but also more generally issues about working time, flexibility, teleworking. Social partnership could play a particular role in this regard.

- Cooperation

The role of partnership, as a key theme of EQUAL, should support what cooperation activities achieve best results. This is particularly crucial for SME engagement.

- Supporting structures to anticipate and manage change

This introduces human resource management, social responsibility, quality assurance, marketing.

The applications of ICT features across these sub-themes, and should be a focus of the work of the European Thematic Networks in theme F.

In order to focus Theme F on demand-side activities, the two main topics that stand out are :

- Change to work organisation (with emphasis on the application of ICT)
- Provision of support structures to anticipate or manage change (with emphasis on ICT)

In the context of skills development, a particularly interesting sub-topic that emerges is :

- Skills transfer particularly from older to younger people.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE EUROPEAN THEMATIC NETWORKS

3.1. MAINSTREAMING, DISSEMINATION AND ENCOURAGING INNOVATION

In our thematic group we can develop different ways of exchanging the experiences from EQUAL, for example:

- Mainstreaming results directly into policy development
- Disseminating results to a wider audience including practitioners
- Exchange of good practice (emphasising the specific circumstances)
- Encouraging and simulating innovation especially targeted at SMEs
- Creating benchmarking groups of DPs on particular topics
- Creating forums for mainstreaming and/dissemination
- Awarding *Beacon* status and responsibilities for mentoring
- Intervening to generate interest across particular clusters e.g. through specific supply chains at sector level, regional or pan-regional, through intermediaries e.g. trade associations, social partners
- Mapping and scoring innovation across SME territory
- Identifying realistic role models for SMEs and other partners in terms of achieving innovation
- The use of ICT in mainstreaming, dissemination and encouraging innovation is critical to the work of EQUAL and will be examined closely for lessons and good practices.

3.2. SCOPE OF THEMATIC WORK

There is potential for DPs to influence decisions, processes and procedures at all levels of policy making – national (member state), regional, local and sub-local (neighbourhoods, estates, communities). There is the potential to influence policies also at sectoral and occupational level.

Entry points for mainstreaming and dissemination vary. They include - not only government, companies and social partners - but also learners, communities and families, schools, learning providers, regional and sectoral bodies, development partnerships, trade associations and business links, other intermediaries and networks.

This section also emphasises the different entry points in terms of content of policy e.g. ICT, employment, work organisation, human resource management, enterprise, corporate social responsibility, age, regional and sectoral disparities.

Learning from EQUAL should span the work of DPs. Lessons and good practices can cover strategic and operational matters such as quality of partnerships, management and evaluation as well as final outcomes and results.

Timescale of thematic work is critical particularly where findings from EQUAL are required to feed into policy decisions and/or dissemination opportunities.

Nevertheless, our early work in thematic groups needs to be clear about where EQUAL themes can be complementary to existing initiatives and where clear value can be added.

The discussion above suggests considerable potential for EQUAL to interact with a number of relevant policy priorities. Successes however will demand on the focus and clarity of lessons and messages, particularly where these can be seen to be filling important gaps and meeting new and challenging needs. It is extremely important that resources devoted to Theme F reach those suffering discrimination and inequality in the labour market and priority needs to be given to ensuring that this key objective can be measured and demonstrated.

Many of the policies and programmes described above contain procedures for agreeing targets and indicators, and this is a particularly interesting area to explore so that DPs in Theme F can align with or complement agreed ways of measuring achievement.

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS

The aim of the workshop is to identify the **main topics** for focusing the work of the European Thematic Group under Theme F. We are also interested in identifying the main ideas about how best to mainstream and share good practice.

We are interested in two broad objectives of mainstreaming lessons and good practices:

- helping to identify innovation and lessons to mainstream
- helping to encourage and stimulate innovation and mainstreaming

As far as focusing down on topics, we should take account of the following criteria:

- ensuring sufficient level of activity and interest across member states (DPs and CIPs)
- complementing areas that have been sufficiently covered by ADAPT
- consider aspects of future change particularly in relation to ICT
- placing emphasis on demand-led activities as well as supply-side
- promoting sustainability in activities (sustaining businesses and skills)
- emphasising the competitiveness of businesses and individuals
- emphasising activities that help anticipate and manage change
- promoting social partnership and social responsibility.

In order to focus Theme F on demand-side activities, two topics that could provide a focus are :

- **Changes to work organisation (with emphasis on the application of ICT) such as : changing working practices, creating work-life balance, improving quality of work**
- **Provision of support structures to anticipate or manage change (with emphasis on ICT) ; corporate social responsibility has the potential to link with this topic.**

In the context of skills development, a particularly interesting sub-topic that emerges is :

- **Skills transfer particularly from older to younger people.**

In the workshop, we will be interested in hearing participants' views on this focus.

4.1. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Partnership and stakeholders

- What role does partnership play in mainstreaming?
- How can partners support mainstreaming?
- What specific partnership factors contribute to successful mainstreaming?
- What are the key mainstreaming roles in a partnership? Are there particular roles for business, government, social partners?
- What are the triggers for encouraging greater SME involvement in innovation and mainstreaming?
- How does the application of ICT support partnership and mainstreaming?

Mechanics of mainstreaming

- What are the different entry points for mainstreaming (e.g. EES)?
- What are the instruments?
- How do you know when you have been successful?

4.2. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS - THEME F

EU policy

- What are the policy priorities at EU level?
- What progress is being made?
- What are the key areas of concern?

Member states

- Do member states share these priorities?
- Which priorities offer the greatest potential for mainstreaming? And why?
- How is the policy priority formulated in relation to adaptation to change and ICTs – what are the issues – what are the opportunities and constraints in terms of innovation?
- What are the main opportunities to benefit from mainstreaming – who can they learn from, how can they support innovation, what scope is there for change and learning?
- Who are the key actors in bringing about change in work adaptation; what role do they perceive for ICT?

Questions to DPs

- Do they have a plan or strategy for mainstreaming? What is their approach to mainstreaming in relation to Theme F?
- What are the aspects of partnership in their DP that will encourage mainstreaming? What methods do they give priority to? How will they know when something has been mainstreamed?
- Who are the key actors?
- What are the preconditions for mainstreaming?
- What essentially needs to happen? Is there a critical path?
- What particular relationships have been forged with SMEs in the partnership? What will lead to strong links between SMEs to increase the potential to mainstream? What role for ICT in this activity?
- How will DP ensure that their work targets those suffering from labour market disadvantage and discrimination?
- How will DPs know that mainstreaming has been successful?

THEME 4G: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - RECONCILING FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

“Reconciling family and professional life as well as the re-Integration of men and women who have left the labour market, by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services”

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

Theme G of the EQUAL Community Initiative is almost entirely consistent with Guideline 18 of the 2002 version of the EES-Guidelines. This Guideline requires that the implementation of various directives and social partner agreements in this area should be accelerated and monitored regularly. Needs-tailored care services and an equal sharing of family responsibilities are regarded as being key to (re) entry and continued participation of women and men in the labour market. Member States and the Commission highlight the crucial importance of policies on career breaks, parental leave and part-time work, as well as flexible working arrangements that serve the interests of both employers and male and female employees. Guideline 18 urges Member States to:

- design, implement and promote family-friendly policies, including affordable, accessible and high-quality care services for children and other dependants, as well as parental and other leave schemes;
- consider setting a national target, in accordance with their national situation, for increasing the availability of care services for children and other dependants;
- give special attention to women and men, considering a return to the paid workforce after an absence and, to that end, they will examine the means of gradually eliminating the obstacles of such return.

Guideline 16, which enforces a Gender Mainstreaming approach across all pillars of the EES, must also be applied to all EQUAL themes. Member States need to provide for adequate data collection systems and procedures, and are encouraged to adopt strategies for:

- developing and reinforcing consultative systems with gender equality bodies;
- applying procedures for gender impact assessment under each guideline;
- developing indicators to measure progress in gender equality in relation to each guideline.

This first analysis of DPs priorities and activities indicates that Member States have ensured through their selection processes that DPs with a Theme G focus are very much in line with the relevant guidelines of the EES. Furthermore, by the choice of their thematic priorities and subsequent DP selection, Member States seem to respond to the 2002 Council recommendations related to equal opportunities performance. This is evident in EQUAL DP's intentions to tackle shortcomings in the field of childcare provision and to raise women's labour market participation rates. EQUAL will thus contribute to meeting the quantitative targets for achieving gender equality in economic life set by the Lisbon European Council in 2000 and recently re-affirmed by the Barcelona Summit in 2002. The main target is to raise women's employment rate from the average figure of 51% today to more than 60% by 2010. EQUAL will also support a better reconciliation of working and family life and its multiple strategies may help Member States to set new benchmarks for improved childcare provision, as they also agreed at the Lisbon Summit.

There is also a potential for synergies with the 5th Community Framework Programme on Gender Equality (2001-2006). Two of the objectives of this programme are closely related to EQUAL activities under theme G, namely:

- promoting gender equality in economic life;
- promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes.

Re-enforcing cooperation with national Gender Equality Authorities and the coordination of their activities at European level are seen as the main methods of achieving progress. A large number of EQUAL DPs in Theme G and H involve and reinforce the work of equality bodies at all levels but most frequently in a local context. In addition, there may be interesting links to be established with the European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family, as well as with the activities of the Commission Expert Group on Gender and Employment. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the competent EU-level NGO. It is the largest co-ordinating body of national and European non-governmental women's organisations in the European Union. One of the EWL main tasks is to keep women informed about the policy developments at EU-level.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to analyse thoroughly the possible impact of EQUAL outcomes, given current and emerging policy developments at the national level. However, there are some indications that Member States will make use of EQUAL models to enforce the implementation of new legislation and to enrich current policy debate on relevant issues.

Examples:

Germany amended its parental leave legislation in 2001. The new regulations allow parents to work up to 30 hours per week during their leave, without losing parental leave benefits. The intention is to prevent the very generous leave provision of three years turning into a trap for women because their employability and career perspectives may suffer, through lack of contact with the labour market. All German DPs in Theme G have retained parents during, and immediately after, parental leave as a major target group. The high visibility of EQUAL will be used to encourage women and also men who are on parental leave to keep in touch with the labour market, and to convince employers to offer part-time positions and access to in-house training to employees on leave.

Italian DPs focusing on work-life balance intend to heighten awareness, and the use, of new legislation on the reconciliation of working and family life.

French DPs explicitly refer to the parity law (2001), which ensures women's equal participation in elections and thus, in political decision-making. They plan to explore how principles and procedures enshrined in that law may be applied to decision-making in trade unions and employers' organisations. Other French DPs intend to explore the implications of the 35-hours week and to push for more needs-tailored, flexible working time solutions that go beyond the usual part-time formulas.

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Under Theme G, 90 DPs have been approved by eight Member States and one candidate country (Bfr, F, D, ES, IRL, L, NL, P, plus CZ). With 35 DPs, France has the highest concentration of Theme G DPs, followed by Spain with 22 and the Netherlands with 14 projects. The number of DPs in the other countries involved is considerably lower: Portugal (6), Germany (5), Belgium (fr) (4), Ireland (2), Luxemburg and the Czech Republic (1). Amongst the 120 DPs listed under Theme H, more than 20 also have a focus that corresponds to Theme G. These projects are mainly from Member States that have not chosen an involvement with Theme G. They have been included in the analysis of that theme.

In general, DPs are consistent with the priorities and sub-themes chosen by Member States. Slightly less than 10% appear to be focusing on themes belonging to other pillars. In most cases, this involves support to women's business creation and entrepreneurship. A larger number of DPs will, in parallel to their Theme G activities, embark on strategies which are not listed in the relevant parts of their respective CIPs. Again, these additional foci link to other pillars and themes. The most frequently mentioned include:

- consultancy to SMEs and training for their employees, in the face of structural and technological change;

- support to local or regional development through tapping the unused potential of disadvantaged groups;
- programmes to protect women's health and to tackle occupational health hazards.

Two-thirds of all DPs with a clear Theme G focus have committed themselves to an overriding policy goal, which is the development of work-life balance strategies for women and men. The remaining third have opted for the topic of preparation for employment in specific jobs or sectors and, in some cases, the development of new occupational profiles is also on their agendas. Most of these DPs target jobs in the care sector and other family support services. In addition, integrated pathways to employment in other growth areas such as ICT, hotel, catering and tourism, ecology and environment, arts and crafts and the social economy appear to be a priority in some 20% of DPs.

2.1. COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO IMPROVED WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Looking more closely at the available data, it is apparent that 50% of DPs having opted for work-life balance schemes, are focusing on concepts of reconciliation of work and private life for women and men, which link both flexible work organisation and the provision of care for children and other dependants, as well as other family support services. Almost all of these DPs are planning to introduce new approaches to concerted action by building networks linking employers, social partner organisations, guidance and training institutions, local/regional authorities, employment offices and relevant NGOs. Inducing a cultural change is an integral part of these joint efforts. This includes awareness raising of, and training on, work-life balance and its benefits for companies, their employees and local communities and also targeting and convincing men to share family responsibilities.

A substantial number of DPs, particularly in France and Italy¹⁵, will be running their multi-faceted activities in the framework of territorial pacts for work-life balance or gender equality. This involves a "time bureau" for a city or a region that aims to help women and men reconcile working and family life and cultural and political activities. These innovative agencies work to harmonise the use or allocation of time and schedules. They cover working time, the opening hours of schools and childcare centres and shops and public authorities and even the timetables of public transport systems. After a careful analysis of the existing obstacles to striking a satisfying work-life balance, partners in the pacts will develop action plans to improve the situation, making sure that they also take account of employers' needs and requirements. An important component in many of the territorial pacts is the setting up of observatories to assemble the necessary gender data and to monitor progress. Designing and implementing specific training for "bridging functions" such as equality counsellors, gender and diversity experts and work-life balance mediators are other features of this specific category of DPs.

2.2. FLEXIBLE WORK-ORGANISATION BENEFITING EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Only a minority of the Theme G DPs appears to be focusing exclusively on flexible work organisation that reconciles the needs of employees or workers with those of companies in the public and private sectors. They often place an emphasis on SMEs or use new information and communication technologies to create opportunities for tele-working and for distance and e-learning. Just like their more comprehensive counterparts, these DPs work to introduce change in company cultures by sensitising and training employers, senior managers, HDR staff, trade unionists and shop stewards and by winning men over to share family duties. A number of projects will try to include the positive results of testing new forms of work organisation in collective bargaining and labour agreements.

It is interesting to note that some DPs have managed to form regional clusters of companies and employer networks in distinct economic sectors and/or business areas where there is obviously

¹⁵ Italy is not covering theme G. Yet, it has a large number of DPs in theme H which are focusing on reconciliation and work-life balance.

the greatest need for flexibility. Examples include lawyer's and notary's offices and hotel, restaurants and catering, food production, retail, ICT and other services to business. These clusters will become test beds for models of new work organisation and individualised training sometimes applying tele-work, but more often part-time, job sharing or working time account solutions. Different forms of computer and Internet-based training will be offered with work - stations located either, on the job, or in people's homes. Results will be mainstreamed in the respective sectors and business areas, at regional and national level. In two cases, DPs aim to implement their successful models through business chains, operating at national and even at European level.

2.3. NEEDS-TAILORED FLEXIBLE CARE AND OTHER FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Given the lack of adequate childcare facilities in many Member States and the financial cut-backs in the public sector, it is not surprising that a critical mass of Theme G DPs aims to enlarge the existing provision by supporting women's business creation and self-employment in the care sector. Others plan to set up care for children of different age groups, as social economy enterprises or as part of community services. Also, most projects operating under this sub-theme will offer training for carers, drawing on the potential of older women, returners and women immigrants. The proposed training programmes include integrated pathways and tend to value and accredit informal learning and skills acquired outside the normal education systems (accreditation of prior learning - APL). Very few projects explicitly target men but those that do will train them as professional carers.

Luxembourg has one DP in Theme H, but its approach highlights a severe problem in the care sector. The pressing need for childcare places, in some parts of the country has created a demand that up until now, has only be met through the emergence of jobs in the black or grey economy and or those that represent precarious employment. This has put both the carers and the parents in a difficult position. The idea of the DP is to create regular care jobs through cooperation with local authorities and employers, and to turn informal home-based childcare into legal businesses that will be subject to quality control.

Generally, DPs emphasise more flexible care provision, in some cases linked to individualised services catering for parents with irregular working hours, shift-workers or highly mobile managers. This provision may include transport for children and/or parents, over-night care and other neighbourhood services such as cleaning and gardening or shopping. Some DPs aim to improve existing networks of voluntary neighbourhood support and thus, strengthen contacts and communication between old and young residents.

A much smaller number of DPs seeks to provide training for carers of senior citizens and people with disabilities and chronic diseases. Some of these combine the training activities with the setting-up of infrastructures and support agencies specialised in the needs of patients who would normally have to rely on institutional care. They try to put together a service package that will allow people to remain in their normal social environments for as long as possible.

2.4. THE BROAD VARIETY OF TARGET GROUPS

Almost all DPs cater for a mix of target groups. Whilst – given the different backgrounds and needs – this mix is an enormous challenge, it might also serve as a test lab within the DPs, allowing for transfer of successful methodologies from one target group to another.

The largest group of beneficiaries is unemployed women who for different reasons have difficulties in accessing the labour market or developing satisfying career paths. About half of the projects address women and men. A critical mass of DPs is targeting groups with multiple disadvantages. Starting with the least frequently mentioned groups, the following list gives an overview of the beneficiaries:

- gypsy and traveller women;
- women (and men) with disabilities;
- people caring for children or other dependants with disabilities;
- older workers;

- single parents;
- immigrants and ethnic minorities;
- women with no/low qualifications.

A few DPs seem to combine the objective of raising employment levels of women and young people with the development of forward looking strategies to boost the supply side for the care sector, in the face of the shrinking population that is of employment age. They seek to attract young women and/or men, school leavers and unemployed adults to career paths in the care sector whilst, at the same time, working with relevant key actors to produce new models of flexible work organisation that encourage a reconciliation of work and private life. Similar approaches will be applied to people during and after their parental leave and to both women and men returning to the labour market after a longer absence. Three DPs, from Denmark¹⁶, Germany and the Netherlands, are targeting men exclusively, with the aim of training them as professional carers.

Potential and active female entrepreneurs are an important target group, addressed by many DPs, by linking job creation and reconciliation activities in the service sector, particularly in dependant and health care. It appears that women working as “assisting spouses” in family businesses are seen as a vulnerable group, as they carry an enormous burden. They have to juggle their roles as businesswomen, mothers, wives and homemakers and to work many irregular or anti-social hours. Strategies that help these ‘invisible’ business women to better reconcile their multiple tasks and the establishing of a recognised legal status for women co-owners of family businesses are issues on the agenda of several DPs in a number of Member States, such as France, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

2.5. NEW MODELS FOR THE DELIVERY OF TRAINING

Almost all DPs, offering training for the sustainable labour market integration of disadvantaged groups, have chosen integrated pathway approaches. These pathways combine guidance and counselling, flexible, and often modular, training and work experience placements with job coaching or mediation and on-going support during the crucial time after recruitment. Distance training including e-learning is not frequently mentioned and tends to appear in a balanced mix of virtual methodologies, face-to-face training and group work. Schemes for digital literacy and basic ICT training are to be found as part of low-threshold (non-threatening) training provision.

Employer networks and company clusters that are mentioned above are sometimes organised in parallel to training pools and consortia. The idea is to introduce quality management in training and education and to enhance the capacity of training institutions as service providers to both the trainees and the local/regional business community.

2.6. ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Only few DPs place a major emphasis on the job threshold. After needs-tailored training and work experience placements, they plan to experiment with alternative forms of employment. Sometimes they bridge the gap to the regular labour market and sometimes they are a permanent solution for certain groups of beneficiaries. These DPs include temporary work, including subsidised low wage schemes and job creation and placement in insertion or transition companies.

As mentioned earlier, entrepreneurship and self-employment for people who are not regarded as “born” entrepreneurs are seen as alternative forms of employment by a large number of DPs (25%).

¹⁶ Denmark is not covering theme G. The relevant DP is operating under theme H.

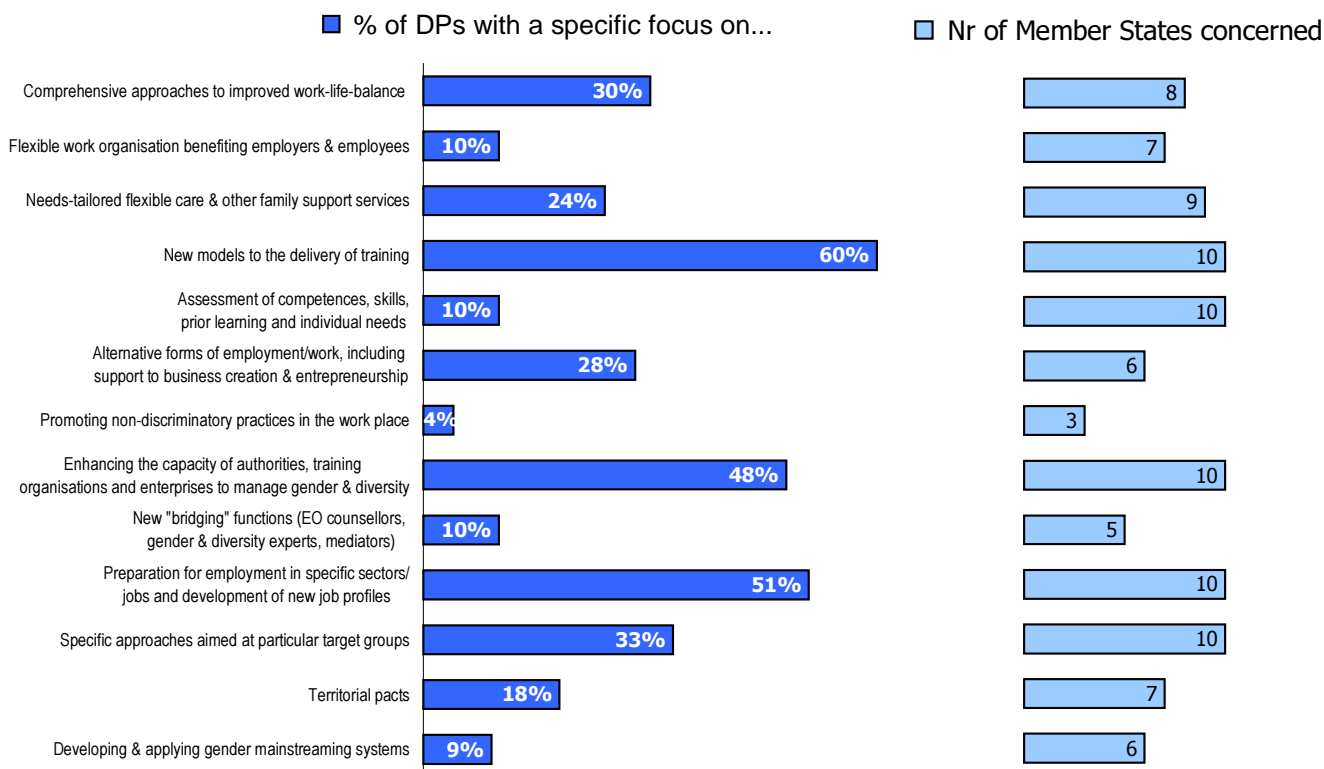
2.7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Slightly less than 10% of DPs are exclusively dedicated to either developing gender mainstreaming systems or applying existing procedures to education and training, business creation or SME support structures or measures. This includes the collection of gender data and the analysis and study of gender gaps and relevant best practice, as well as undertaking gender impact assessments. Based on the emerging results, these DPs plan to set and negotiate both numerical and qualitative equality targets and to draft, implement and monitor equality plans for geographical areas and/or economic sectors. Awareness raising and training of decision-makers who are in a position to ensure sustainability of such new systems complement the proposed activities. Almost always, the relevant DPs are also committed to strengthening the role of equality bodies and gender and diversity experts. Some of these DPs stress the need to improve female participation in decision-making in politics, the economy, culture and civil society and will organise training to encourage and support women in playing a more active role in their local or regional environment.

Almost 50% of DPs integrate the transversal theme of equal opportunities for women and men by developing strategies to enhance the capacity of authorities, enterprises and training institutions to manage gender issues. Frequently, intercultural communication and diversity management to promote equality for immigrants and ethnic minorities are part of these strategies. Methodological approaches include the assessment of competencies, skills and needs, guidance, training and career development offers and itineraries to empowerment. New services, staff training and the development of quality control systems are additional components to be found in this category of DPs. A fairly small number of DPs plans to integrate gender and diversity concepts into quality control systems. Efforts to tackle discriminatory pre-conceptions in enterprises, gender and diversity sensitive recruitment practices and mentoring schemes are also present in these actions.

Again, experts with “bridging” functions such as equality counsellors, work-life-balance agents and intercultural mediators appear to play an important role in this context. Training and continuing education will be developed to create and strengthen pools of relevant expertise.

Common Thematic Fields



2.8. MAINSTREAMING

Mainstreaming successful models and best practice in EQUAL is built into the set-up of the programme itself. Random tests to check the composition of DPs reveal that the requirement of bringing relevant key actors into the composition of the partnerships has generally been met. It is too early to tell if the impressive lists of political decision-makers, authorities, companies, employers and unions and NGOs will result in feasible and pro-active mainstreaming concepts. Emerging strategies include networking, communication and decision-making systems amongst partners, visibility and media campaigns and, sometimes, the use of synergies with existing policy frameworks such as local or regional employment pacts or new legislation.

The relatively high number of DPs that has opted for inter-agency, sectoral and territorial approaches presents encouraging prospects for mainstreaming and sustainability.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

Whilst some of the following proposed priorities fall easily into place, as they are represented by the majority or at least a critical mass of DPs, others reflect important policy issues that are not addressed by many projects. A third category includes themes, which appear to be relevant because of potential synergies with certain guidelines of the EES or recent national policy developments.

3.1. CREATING FLEXIBLE CARE PROVISION AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CARE

The issue of care for children and other dependants appears as an important first option. Besides tackling the tremendous shortcomings of this provision, a range of related problems deserves to be analysed and discussed at the European level. Although the number of DPs focusing exclusively on this sub-theme represents less than a critical mass, the lack of quality care is addressed by many others which primarily pursue different goals.

Outcomes of EMPLOYMENT-NOW have shown that care services can be provided in a variety of legal forms and cannot, in the face of increasingly tight public budgets, be necessarily provided by the Welfare State. Private sector small businesses are able to satisfy part of the demand and are often more responsive to the needs of parents for greater flexibility. However, to survive economically, they can only accept parents who are able to pay the market price, or beyond it, for this kind of service and this obviously excludes those which are in a less privileged situation. Small care units based in the homes of childminders (day mother models) are less costly, but run the risk that these day mothers are forced into the role of entrepreneurs without being really prepared to take on the challenges of the personal development of the children and running their units to accommodate the time requirements of their parents. This situation often leads to precarious jobs and the use of black labour and to services that are subject to no quality control. NOW achievements such as the establishing of home-based care units with carers employed by local charities or NGOs and the use of public subsidies to offer affordable prices to parents, are clearly solutions that could be generalised. New models of public-private partnerships, including the introduction or improved use of employers' contributions to child or dependant care provision, could be another important topic to be developed in the context of European level thematic work.

Opening up jobs and career paths in the care sector for target groups that do not possess the necessary formal educational attainments is another important topic emerging from the plans of DPs. The potential of recruiting, training and employing people with multiple disadvantages could be analysed in relation to the current and future demands for suitably skilled or experienced personnel. Identifying and accrediting informal learning and life skills (APL) is of paramount importance in this context. Whilst APL is on the agenda of many DPs in many Member States, there are relatively few that can demonstrate long-standing experience or well-established systems to undertake or promote this type of activity. European level thematic work including this

topic could draw on the good practice of these DPs and stimulate the development of similar methods in other countries.

The need for improvement and change in the training for carers that is offered by the national or regional educational and training systems across the Union could be a difficult, but important, issue for European level thematic work. Only a few projects address this question, and if they do, it is more within the context of an overarching concern to value and up-grade typical female work. Results of the recent OECD study "Programme for International Student Assessment" (PISA) suggest that childcare must entail more than offering a safe and stimulating haven for kids. New tasks for carers such as intercultural education, early learning of foreign languages, integrating children with disabilities and different ethnic backgrounds, working with immigrant and other disadvantaged parents, strategies to fight domestic violence or the role of childcare centres in the community are being discussed in many Member States. EQUAL could become an important laboratory when it comes to testing the implications of these emerging needs on training systems. Pertinent questions to be addressed include:

- How can initial training for carers take account of these new tasks?
- How can continuing training incorporate new demands, while at the same time becoming more flexible and modular?
- How can systems ensure that people who manage to complete, for instance with the support of EQUAL, basic care training develop a motivation for life-long learning and acquire more specific and advanced qualifications?

Similar issues apply to the future of health care. In the face of the large percentage of Europe's population that have, or will soon, reach the age of retirement, the demand for care staff will continue to grow. This applies to regular care for senior citizens, supplying daily life services and basic nursing, as many EQUAL DPs are well aware, but also to a range of care specialties which are already emerging as health treatment improves, and more people can live longer while suffering from a serious health problem or even a chronic disease. It would be in the interests of EQUAL target groups to explore training and employment opportunities related to these new needs and specialties in care provision. EQUAL best practice could support European and national training policies in the endeavour to adapt training and education systems accordingly.

3.2. COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN AND MEN

The majority of Theme G DPs will be focusing on comprehensive approaches to improving the work-life balance for women and men and have promising mainstreaming potential. The activities of such DPs are clearly the most obvious option for the initial European thematic work. The concept, as it emerges in many DPs, assembles the multiple aspects and challenges of Theme G such as:

- the need for more flexible work organisation in public and private sectors which benefits both employees and employers;
- the lack of accessible, affordable high quality care for children and other dependants;
- the analysis and use of time as a precious commodity for women and men who desire to reconcile working and family life, leisure and cultural activities and an active role as members of their communities;
- think-tanks for the production of service ideas to support families, dual-career couples and inter-generational cohesion.

In addition, partners involved in the DPs are often the sorts of players who are in a position to ensure the sustainability of new models that will be developed thanks to EQUAL and to promote social, cultural and system change. Territorial work-life balance pacts should play an important role since they imply the development of a formal agreement. Other concepts for the mainstreaming of work-life balance schemes such as employer or sectoral networks should be integrated in the same European Thematic Group (ETG) with the aim of discussing strategies for the territorial outreach of those activities.

Since some countries such as France and Italy can build on prior experience with time bureaux, this European thematic work could also foster transnational transfer of good practice from its inception.

3.3. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Although the number of DPs committed to developing and applying gender mainstreaming systems is relatively small, it is important to make maximum use of this emerging pool of expertise. Gender equality is a transversal theme in EQUAL. DPs operating under other pillars and themes could benefit from a transversal ETG. Approaches, methodologies and procedures being developed under Themes G and H may not only prove useful across the other themes within EQUAL, but may also enhance the integration of a gender dimension into other programming and implementation measures co-financed by the European Structural Funds. This could be particularly true for the European Social Fund whose regulations require that Member States apply gender mainstreaming to Community Support Frameworks and Operational Programmes, as well as to the selection of projects and to monitoring and evaluation.

Since gender mainstreaming DPs often seem to operate in combination with territorial approaches, there are also good prospects for the transfer of results and best practice and for the integration of new procedures into regional and local development. The transfer of EQUAL gender mainstreaming approaches to other policy areas should also be explored.

3.4. OPTIONS FOR THEMATIC CLUSTERING

Two of the three options that have been identified for European level thematic work suggest a clustering within Theme G.

Creating flexible care provision and improving the quality of care

For this first proposal which responds to the lack of qualified care workers but also aims to value and up-grade female work, the cluster should include DPs that:

- focus on improving the quantity, quality and flexibility of care provision;
- are geared to training of carers of dependant, senior citizens' and people with health problems, in particular those addressing target groups with no/low formal qualifications that use informal learning and apply APL;
- offer support to women's business creation and entrepreneurship in the care and family service sectors;
- try to overcome the problem of precarious jobs and black labour in the care sector;
- are developing new training and job profiles for both initial and continuing training which take account of recent trends and demands, in particular for more advanced qualifications;
- plan to work on systems' change.

Comprehensive approaches to work-life-balance

The selection of a sample of DPs to co-operate in the framework of a European Thematic Group (ETG) focusing on comprehensive approaches to work-life-balance should include DPs which:

- "have it all", as they combine flexible work organisation strategies with the development of flexible care for children and other dependants, plus other family support services in the framework of territorial and sectoral pacts. The time bureau approach should play a prominent role;
- focus either on flexible work organisation or the improvement of care provision.

Gender Mainstreaming and Equal Opportunities

It is proposed that this third option should not be confined to Themes G and H, but should become a transversal working group involving DPs from all other pillars and themes. This cluster could possibly include:

- Theme G and H DPs exclusively dedicated to developing and applying gender mainstreaming systems;

- Theme G and H DPs which concentrate on positive action in both public and private sectors and aim to enhance the capacity of authorities, enterprises and training institutions to manage gender and equality issues;
- DPs operating under Themes A and B and asylum seekers which aim to integrate the gender dimension and/or explore and develop synergies amongst gender and diversity strategies;
- Theme G and H DPs developing models that integrate gender and diversity into business excellence and quality management concepts;
- DPs working in the framework of the remaining themes focusing on quality control and management systems and human resource development, including positive action for women and disadvantaged groups.

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS

To ensure a maximum of degree of reinforcement between the outcomes of European and national thematic networking on Theme G, the workshop should result in the production of a working structure for the ETG which ensures consistency and complementarity in the priority options chosen by the Commission and Member States. The discussion should include the following steps:

1. Mapping out the proposals for European level thematic work and the topics identified by Member States for national thematic networking to embark on a prioritising process that leads to the selection of the topic to be addressed in this first round of European level thematic activities;
2. Defining the topic, including the various sub-themes or sub-topics that should be considered by the future ETG;
3. Exploring possible links and synergies between the national networks and the ETG in relation to its topics and sub-topics. These should be designed so that the considerations of the ETG take due account of the day-to-day-realities of DPs, whilst capitalising on the successes of their outcomes. At the same time, these links should ensure that national networks and individual DPs can understand the purpose and be up-dated about the progress of work of the ETG, so that they have a real sense of involvement and can contribute more effectively to the European thematic outputs;
4. Collecting first ideas on methodological approaches to be adopted by the ETG, including Internet based communication and networking tools;
5. Considering the desirability of a transversal ETG focusing on gender mainstreaming and determining possible Theme G input to that group;
6. Clarifying the responsibilities that should be assumed by the Member States that are interested in pursuing the topic and wish to be involved in the ETG. In particular, the roles and tasks of Member States willing to act as co-ordinators or prepared to lead the work on any sub-topic which has been identified, should be agreed. This includes practicalities such as hosting and servicing meetings;
7. Identifying the contacts that should be established with the following bodies or programmes, so that work on the chosen topic might be better informed and its outcomes more effectively disseminated and mainstreamed at European and national levels:
 - The 5th Community Framework Programme on Gender Equality (2001-2006)¹⁷;
 - European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family¹⁸;
 - The Commission Expert Group on Gender and Employment¹⁹;
 - The European Women's Lobby²⁰.

¹⁷ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/strategy_en.html

¹⁸ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/eoss/index_en.html

¹⁹ <http://www.umist.ac.uk/management/ewerc/egge/egge.html>

THEME 4 H: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - REDUCING GENDER GAPS AND DESEGREGATION

“Reducing gender gaps and supporting desegregation”

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

Theme H objectives of reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation are reasonably consistent with the relevant Guideline 17 of the 2002 version of the Guidelines of the European Employment Strategy (EES). This Guideline urges Member States and social partners to pay attention to the imbalance in the representation of women and men in certain economic sectors and occupations, as well as to the improvement of female career opportunities. A wide range of choices in education and training is regarded as essential from the earliest stage. Therefore, Member States have agreed in their relevant Council Decision, in February 2002, in to:

- strengthen their efforts to reduce the gender gap in unemployment rates between women and men by actively supporting the increased employment of women and consider setting national targets in accordance with the objectives set out in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council;
- take action to bring about a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors and at all levels;
- initiate positive steps to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and to diminish differentials in income between women and men: actions to address gender pay gaps are necessary in the public and private sector, and the impact of policies on gender pay gaps should be identified and addressed;
- consider an increased use of measures for the advancement of women in order to reduce gender gaps.

Guideline 16 which enforces a Gender Mainstreaming approach across all pillars of the EES must also be applied to all EQUAL themes. Member States need to provide for adequate data collection systems and procedures, and are encouraged to adopt strategies for

- developing and reinforcing consultative systems with gender equality bodies;
- applying procedures for gender impact assessment under each guideline;
- developing indicators to measure progress in gender equality in relation to each guideline.

This first analysis of DPs' priorities and activities indicates that, through their selection processes, Member States have ensured that DPs operating under Theme H are in line with the relevant guideline of the EES. Except for the required steps to diminish the gender pay gap, an issue that is only indirectly covered by a minority of DPs through strategies to value female work and improve working conditions and pay, all demands of Guideline 16 are being met. Through their chosen thematic priorities and related DP selection procedures, Member States also seem to respond to the 2002 Council recommendations related to equal opportunities performance. This is certainly true for the numerous efforts in Theme H to fight female unemployment and increase women's participation rates in the labour market. The integration of both family friendly, flexible work organisation and improvement of care provision reflects the important point raised in the recommendations that there can be no increase in female employment without quantitatively and qualitatively satisfying care provision and improved opportunities to reconcile work and family life. EQUAL will thus contribute to meeting the quantitative targets for achieving gender equality in economic life set by the Lisbon European Council in 2000 and recently re-affirmed by the

²⁰ <http://www.womenlobby.org/>

Barcelona Summit in 2002. One target is to raise women's employment rate from the average figure of 51% today to more than 60% by 2010. Although the most pressing recommendations are highlighting the lack of care provision and the gender pay gap, a number of Member States are being urged to embark on more effective desegregation strategies. These include Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the UK. EQUAL DPs, in these countries, and also throughout Europe possess a huge potential to support both horizontal and vertical desegregation. As is clearly visible in this first analysis of Theme H activities, a contribution may also be expected to meeting other objectives set by Lisbon (2000) and Stockholm (2001) European Councils including "(the Union) to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" and to define "approaches for maintaining and improving the quality of work (...)"²¹.

There is also a potential for synergies with the 5th Community Framework Programme on Gender Equality (2001-2006). Three of the objectives of this programme are closely related to EQUAL activities under Theme H, namely:

- promoting gender equality in economic life;
- improving the gender balance in political, economic and social decision-making;
- promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes.

Re-enforcing cooperation with national Gender Equality Authorities and the coordination of their activities at European level are seen as the main methods of achieving progress. A large number of EQUAL DPs in Theme H and G involve and reinforce the work of equality bodies at all levels. EQUAL activities also link to the tasks of the Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment which each year assesses Member States' equal opportunities performance in the framework of the EES and to the activities of European Women's Lobby (EWL). The EWL is the largest co-ordinating body of national and European non-governmental women's organisations in the European Union. One of its main tasks is to keep women informed about the policy developments at EU level. A variety of themes addressed by EQUAL are also amongst the major concerns of the Lobby: the gender dimension in European employment and social policies, multiple discrimination, gender and fundamental rights, women asylum seekers and mobilising young women for equality in Europe.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to analyse thoroughly the possible impact of EQUAL outcomes, given current and emerging policy developments at the national level. However, there are some indications that Member States plan to make use of EQUAL models to enforce the implementation of new legislation and/or to enrich current policy debate on relevant issues.

Examples:

In 2000, Sweden established the Gender Equality Council for Transport and IT (Jämställdhetsrådet för transporter och IT – JÄMIT) to explore equality issues in the technology sector and to advise the Government on how to tackle gender gaps in a range of related growth areas. Swedish EQUAL DPs appear to address some of JÄMIT's major recommendations, concerning both horizontal and vertical desegregation in the relevant segments of the labour market.

In Belgium (fr) EQUAL will be contributing good practice to demonstrate the value and impact of a Federal Framework Provision for reducing working hours, enforced in 2000, and of an earlier labour agreement in the health care sector.

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

In total, 120 DPs have been approved for Theme H by 13 Member States (A, Bnl, DK, D, ES, FIN, GR, IT, NL, P, S, UKgb, UKni). With 33 DPs each, Italy and Spain appear to be the front-

²¹ Council Decision of 18 February 2002 on guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2002 (2002/177/EC)

runners. All other Member States that opted for Theme H, selected much smaller numbers of projects: Austria - 13; Netherlands - 9; Germany, Portugal and Sweden - 5; Denmark, Greece and the United Kingdom (gb) - 4; Finland and the United Kingdom (ni) - 2; and Belgium (nl) -1.

The vast majority of DPs appear to be concentrating, as required, on reducing gender gaps and on supporting job desegregation. The exceptions are about 20 DPs that clearly focus on Theme G. These DPs are mostly from Member States that had not elected to be involved in Theme G and they have been included in the analysis of that theme rather than Theme H. In general, DPs are in line with priorities and sub-themes selected by Member States. Exceptions are to be found in some countries that have included long and detailed lists of sub-themes in their CIPs (Bnl, D, UKni) but subsequently selected only a few DPs, which do not cover all of sub-themes. Almost 20% of Theme H DPs focus on, or contain, strong components supporting women's business creation and entrepreneurship and therefore have a link to Pillar 2. A similar number of DPs will, in parallel to their genuine Theme H activities, integrate themes that do not figure in the relevant parts of the CIPs. In most cases, this involves support to SMEs, in particular family businesses, to adapt to structural and technological change, or job creation in social economy enterprises or innovative input to local and regional development.

The available data suggests that DPs tend to fall into four different, but interrelated, categories:

1. DPs tackling gender gaps in employment (aiming generally to reduce female unemployment and to increase women's participation in the labour market);
2. DPs focusing on horizontal desegregation;
3. DPs focusing on vertical desegregation;
4. DPs aiming to combat both horizontal and vertical segregation in training, education and the labour market, but choosing more comprehensive approaches to equal opportunities, either by setting up territorial or sectorial alliances or by developing gender mainstreaming concepts involving desegregation as one important issue amongst others.

2.1. TARGET GROUPS: THE WORLD OF WOMEN

A first analysis of Theme H target groups reveals that most DPs apply the principle of gender mainstreaming which does not regard sex and gender as just another variable of social categories such as immigrants, older workers, people with disabilities or entrepreneurs, but as a primary and overall classification. As far as they are available, target group descriptions show that DPs are carefully highlighting the gender dimension and the specific characteristics of life situations, needs and weak and strong points of women belonging to the various groups being discriminated against or threatened by exclusion.

Similarly to Theme G, almost all DPs cater for a mix of target groups. The largest group of beneficiaries are unemployed women who for different reasons have difficulties in accessing the labour market or in developing satisfying career paths. A critical mass of DPs is targeting groups with multiple disadvantages. Starting with the least frequently mentioned, the following list gives an overview of groups of beneficiaries for which support packages are being developed to tackle a range of different problems and obstacles:

- older women workers (and men) with disabilities;
- women caring for children or other dependants with disabilities;
- prostitutes and victims of sex traffic;
- single parents;
- women entrepreneurs;
- women managers;
- women with no/low qualifications;
- women during and immediately after parental leave;
- women returners (after a longer absence from the labour market);
- girls and young women (and men), including those in transition;
- women co-managers/owners of family businesses;
- highly qualified women;
- women immigrants and ethnic minorities.

In general, it can be observed that, unlike those in Theme G, the vast majority of Theme H DPs focus on female target groups.

2.2. TACKLING GENDER GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT

Around 15% of Theme H DPs aim to increase female employment rates. They intend to establish integrated pathways to a range of jobs for women encountering hurdles when trying to access the labour market. Beneficiaries include women with care responsibilities, parents during and immediately after parental leave, returners, single mothers, immigrants, women with no/low formal qualifications, and in a very few cases, women with disabilities, older workers or victims of sex traffic. Methodological approaches and supportive frameworks mirror the results of efforts to take account of the specific situations of these target groups. These integrated pathways combine counselling and guidance, training that is often modular and work experience placements with individual support reaching well into the early stages of regular employment. Informal learning and accreditation of knowledge and skills acquired outside the formal training systems (accreditation of prior learning - APL) have an important role to play in the design of these pathways. Most DPs in this first category integrate work-life balance approaches such as care provision and/or family-friendly, flexible training and working hours and this helps to pave the way to sustainable employment and to a reconciliation of work and family life.

A small number of DPs in Portugal and Spain will be considering the specific problems of typical female work. Precarious employment in the textile and leather industries, for instance, is often the only option for women home-workers. Frequently, these women can barely make a living and are sometimes not even aware of their minimal rights, as workers. DPs will review working conditions and study their impact on occupational diseases. Awareness raising and information campaigns targeted at the women concerned and also at employers, trade unions and the public at large will be organised to trigger change. Typical female work will be re-evaluated and up-grading training provided with the aim of reducing or removing discrimination. Collective agreements securing health protection standards, improved working conditions and pay are on the agenda of these DPs, as is integrating parents' needs and rights into collective bargaining.

Roughly 50% of DPs in this category offer preparation for employment and/or business creation in typically female occupations or sectors such as dependant care, family support services, hotel, restaurant and catering sector and tourism. The other half is reinforcing women's participation in the information society by providing digital literacy training and training for jobs related to new information and communication technologies (NICT).

A few DPs have designed programmes aiming to promote horizontal desegregation, targeting employment in the preservation and protection of cultural heritage and in simple maintenance and repair of technical household appliances. A minority is linking activities to strategies for vertical desegregation.

It is, however, surprising that there are so few DPs in this category that are concerned with access to the labour market through alternative forms of employment such as temporary work contracts or jobs in insertion or transition companies.

2.3. HORIZONTAL DESEGREGATION

About one third of Theme H DPs appear to be working to widen vocational choices for women of different age groups. They target male dominated sectors such as construction, metallurgy, engineering, ecology and environmental protection and, in addition, a number of crafts. The majority of this category will be tackling gender gaps in specific growth areas of the IT sector, in particular Internet services and multimedia.

The largest number of horizontal desegregation DPs caters for the needs of adult women. Whilst aiming to exploit job opportunities in the sectors and occupations mentioned above, they tend to develop highly individualised training and support measures, covering beneficiaries' itineraries from the first information and counselling contact to labour market integration and beyond. In many cases, lessons learned from EMPLOYMENT-NOW become visible. The approaches that will be applied include comprehensive pathways, coaching and mentoring schemes and also strategies to forge coalitions with employers, social partners and public authorities. In many instances, there is an emphasis on "building the business case for equal opportunities", or in other words, convincing employers of the advantages to be gained from using so-far untapped

female potential. This implies enhancing the capacity of authorities, training providers and enterprises to develop gender sensitive assessment of competencies, skills and needs, combined with guidance, training and career development. Frequently, intercultural communication and diversity management to promote equality for immigrants and ethnic minorities are also part of these strategies. New services, staff training and the development of quality control systems are additional components to be found in some DPs. As in Theme G, a small number of DPs plan to integrate gender and diversity concepts into quality control systems. Efforts to tackle discriminatory pre-conceptions in enterprises, gender and diversity sensitive recruitment practices and mentoring schemes are also contained in these types of activities.

A smaller number of DPs is concentrating on young women's start in adult and working life. To increase vocational choices for both girls and boys, they will join forces with primary and secondary schools and also with counselling and guidance services (DK, FIN, S, UKgb). Activities include analysing the interconnections in typical female socialisation and learning approaches to mathematics and science. DPs are developing teaching and learning methodologies to encourage girls and young women to explore technological subjects, to foster their so far hidden potential and to support them during the transition from school to vocational training or higher education. NICT training and e-learning are high on the agenda in order to ensure equal access to the information and knowledge society. Almost all these concepts integrate training for teachers, trainers and guidance staff and also outreach strategies targeted at parents and male peers. Some DPs, especially in the UK, focus on systemic approaches to preventing and combating gender and ethnic stereotyping.

Only one Theme H DP is explicitly targeting men with its desegregation efforts. The objective of this Danish project is to train men and young people as professional carers. In order to attract them to this typical female area of the labour market, highly promising employment and career prospects are being emphasised, as are the new models for improved work-life balance that will be mainstreamed in the care sector.

Horizontal desegregation strategies are also applied to women's business creation and entrepreneurship. Some 25% of Theme H DPs will work towards the diversification of business ideas and activities. They will support women in their attempts to penetrate promising market segments or niches, particularly in the IT sector and often in multimedia and Internet services. Some DPs even address staunch male domains such as venture capital consultancy and financial services for businesses.

Facilitating access of women entrepreneurs to ICT skills, e-learning and e-commerce is a major concern of DPs in this category. As in Theme G, women co-managers or co-owners of family businesses are seen as an important group that will benefit from these EQUAL activities. In most cases, flexible ICT-based counselling, training and services are used to help alleviate the time constraints and reduce the stress levels of this specific group of business women.

2.4. VERTICAL DESEGREGATION

Slightly less than 5% of DPs operating under Theme H are exclusively focusing on vertical desegregation(18 % address this as a sub-theme amongst others) . Helping women to enter management and middle management, strategies to open women managers' access to senior positions, increasing women's participation in decision-making in social partner organisations, local and regional development and politics are the primary objectives that can be detected amongst these DPs. Efforts to tackle discriminatory pre-conceptions in enterprises, gender and diversity sensitive recruitment and promotion practices can also be seen in the implementation of these concepts. The target groups are highly qualified women such as unemployed university graduates and experienced female managers whose career paths are blocked by the so-called glass ceiling. Besides providing counselling, training, coaching and mentoring to their beneficiaries, these DPs are geared to developing positive actions and introducing gender mainstreaming systems in companies and institutions, or in sectoral, local or regional clusters of companies or even in entire economic sectors. Again, a small number of DPs plan to integrate gender and diversity concepts into quality control systems. Experts with "bridging" functions such as equality counsellors, work-life-balance agents and intercultural mediators appear to play an

important role in this context. Training and continuing education will be developed to create and strengthen pools of relevant expertise.

Once again, women working as so-called assisting spouses in family businesses are being addressed, yet in a different vein. Relevant DPs tend to provide modular training and hands-on-experience in entrepreneurial and managerial skills, which are highly in demand. The aspects that are covered include e-marketing and e-commerce, quality management, new customer services and also transversal competencies and personal development. In most cases, the objective is to promote an improved legal status and better rights for these women and to increase the visibility and appreciation of their input as co-managers and co-owners of SMEs and small craft enterprises.

2.5. COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO DESEGREGATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

A critical mass of Theme H DPs is developing a range of approaches, which link the three types of activities described so far. They will tackle gender gaps in employment and develop solutions to both horizontal and vertical segregation. Particularly in southern Member States such as Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal, these comprehensive strategies will be organised in the framework of territorial pacts. A wide range of local/regional and even national players will be involved in combining equal opportunities objectives with territorial development. The idea is to use women's potential to generate innovation and economic growth, particularly in SMEs. This can include positive action plans to develop an improved gender balance in all positions and hierarchical levels in both private and public sectors and awareness raising and training for employers, HRD personnel, counselling, guidance and placement staff and representatives of social partner organisations. Work-life balance schemes compliment these multi-faceted activities. Similarly, to Theme G, DPs plan to set up observatories that will assemble the necessary gender data and monitor the progress achieved by the new alliances. It is interesting to note that these observatories have many different foci. Some concentrate on desegregation or on business creation and entrepreneurship, whilst others seem to act as "watch dogs", tracking direct and indirect discrimination and bringing it to the attention of those who can support remedial action. Clearly, there are also those observatories, which aim to integrate all issues related to gender and equal opportunities.

Strengthening the role of equality bodies and also designing and implementing specific training for "bridging functions" such as equality counsellors, gender and diversity experts, and work-life-balance mediators are most often an integral part of this category of DPs.

In northern Member States, sectoral alliances seem to be preferred. DPs target large institutions such as universities or employment offices and sometimes build multi-regional partnerships linking vocational training providers and education systems. Others intend to set up coalitions and networks within economic sectors or clusters of occupations where women are underrepresented. Auditing and award systems for equal opportunities performance, often including ethnic diversity, will be developed and tested, or will sometimes be integrated into existing quality management programmes. The information available in the ECDB, indicates that UKgb is the only country planning to explicitly address the gender pay gap.

2.6. GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Approximately 20 % of DPs mention gender mainstreaming as one of their activities. Yet, as in Theme G, less than 10% of DPs are exclusively dedicated to either developing gender mainstreaming systems or applying existing procedures to education and training systems or business creation and SME support provisions. This includes the collection of gender data, analysis and study of gender gaps and relevant best practice, as well as undertaking gender impact assessments. Based on the emerging results, these DPs plan to set and negotiate both numerical and qualitative equality targets and to produce, implement and monitor equality plans for geographical areas and/or economic sectors. Awareness raising and training of decision-makers who are in a position to ensure sustainability of the new systems compliment the proposed activities. Almost always, the relevant DPs are also committed to strengthening the role

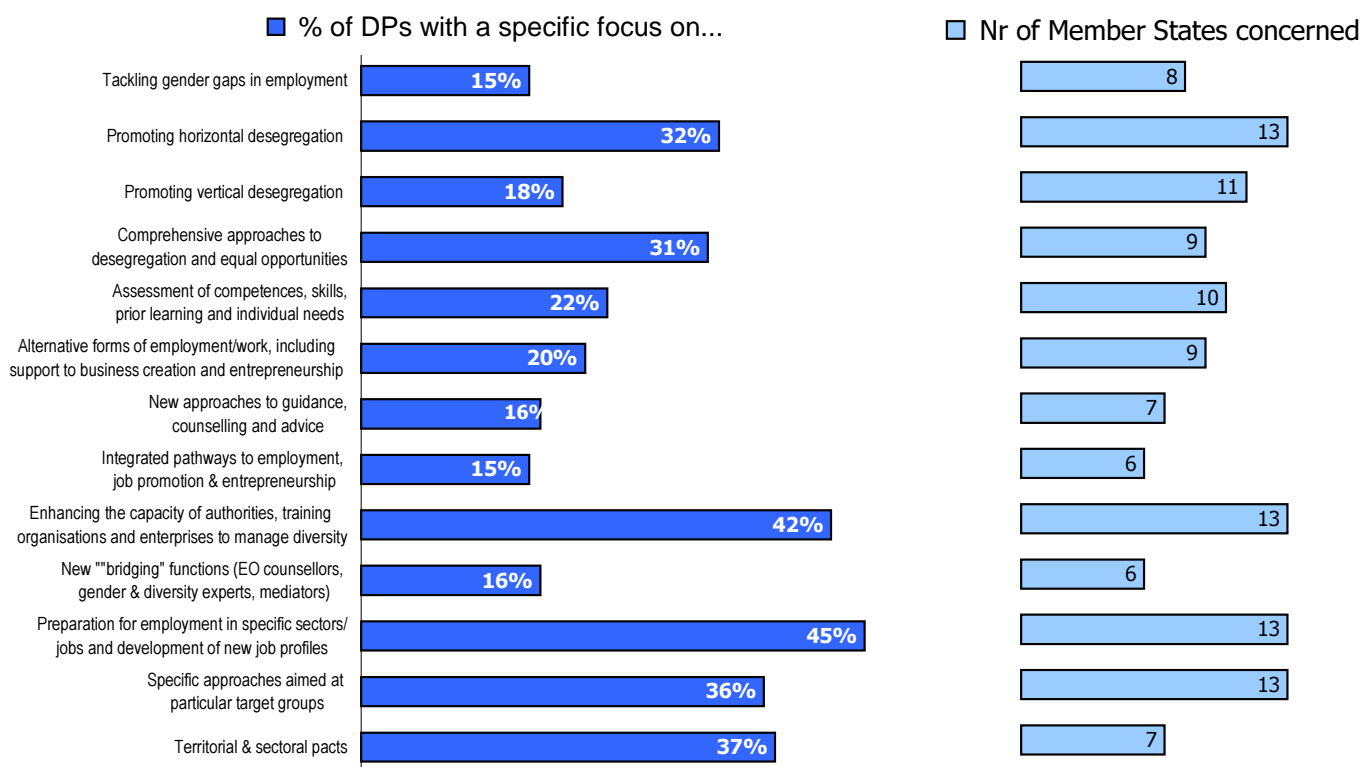
of equality bodies and gender and diversity experts. Some of these DPs stress the need to improve female participation in decision-making in politics, economy, culture and civil society and will organise training to encourage and support women in playing a more active role in their local or regional environment.

2.7. MAINSTREAMING

Mainstreaming successful models and best practice in EQUAL is built into the set-up of the programme itself. Random tests to check the composition of DPs reveal that the requirement of bringing relevant key actors into the composition of the partnerships has generally been met. It is too early to tell if the impressive lists of political decision-makers, authorities, companies, employers and unions and NGOs will result in feasible and pro-active mainstreaming concepts. Emerging strategies include networking, communication and decision-making systems amongst partners, visibility and media campaigns and, sometimes, the use of synergies with existing policy frameworks such as local or regional employment pacts or new legislation.

The relatively high number of DPs that has opted for inter-agency, sectoral and territorial approaches presents encouraging prospects for mainstreaming and sustainability.

Common Thematic Fields



3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS

The wealth of multi-faceted activities proposed by Theme H DPs makes it difficult to distil options for future thematic work. In addition, most of the emerging priorities and sub-themes have been thoroughly covered by thematic work in the framework of EMPLOYMENT-NOW (horizontal and vertical desegregation, women's business creation and entrepreneurship). Two options, which are theme related, and one transversal option are proposed:

3.1. STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ACCESS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Aspects of horizontal desegregation appear to be addressed by a majority of DPs. To avoid duplicating what has already been achieved through NOW thematic work, the proposed Theme H network should deepen the knowledge and understanding of mechanisms that cause gender imbalances on the labour market and of successful desegregation strategies in this field. During a first phase of thematic work, any European Thematic Group (ETG) should focus on a specific growth sector such as NICT that is targeted by a large number of DPs. The ETG could shed light on the variety of obstacles encountered by women who wish to access IT occupations or build careers in different segments of this economic sector. At the same time, it could develop solutions to the existing skills gaps and also help employers to recruit from a larger pool of human resources.

Topics to be explored include many of the challenges, which DPs propose to address such as:

- How to ensure equal access to the information society for girls and young women who tend to be outnumbered by their male peers in relevant activities in schools and youth centres?
- Which strategies can guarantee that the expanding number and variety of IT occupations are being integrated into vocational information, counselling and guidance systems and that IT is being presented as an attractive and encouraging choice to women of all age groups and different educational backgrounds?
- How to take account of women's ways of learning in mainstream IT training programmes?

Another topic to be pursued could be the different skills levels to which EQUAL training provisions for women will be geared. Starting with computer and Internet initiation courses as a pre-requisite to any kind of training or job hunting, the consideration could move to looking into new occupational profiles which have only recently been integrated into national systems of initial or continuing training and at appropriate programmes in higher education and their relevance to women. Topics to be discussed could also include the development of new occupational profiles, in particular, the so-called interface occupations which are often seen as using women's specific potential. These require both technological skills and a range of other skills like communications, design, PR, information and knowledge management and intercultural communication. Addressing these different levels of training will automatically bring the different female target groups into focus and raise additional issues such as:

- How can informal learning and accreditation of skills acquired outside regular training systems be adapted to IT training?
- How can flexible, modular training benefit women (and men) with care responsibilities and help them develop attitudes of life-long learning to meet the demands in this rapidly changing sector?
- Are e-learning and telework really a solution to parents who want to reconcile working and private life?
- Which are the models of best practice to make the maximum of these new ways of technology-based learning, training and work?

In a later phase of thematic work, results could be compared with those emerging from horizontal desegregation DPs focusing on other male domains of the labour market and thus create a degree of cross-fertilisation.

3.2. VERTICAL DESEGREGATION

Given the slow progress of women in moving into senior management and decision-making positions, vertical desegregation remains a crucially important theme. Even though only a minority of DPs will work exclusively on strategies to break the glass ceiling, it should be considered as a second option for thematic work at European level.

Since the set-up of EQUAL requires the active participation of relevant key-actors, this thematic working group could possibly yield types of results, which were emerging only tentatively in EMPLOYMENT-NOW. Many NOW projects developed a wide range of high quality training programmes to support women on their way to management positions and while climbing the corporate ladder. Yet, experience showed that without employers being convinced of the business advantages to be gained by using un-tapped female potential, these training and support efforts were often short-lived and sometimes in vain. Bringing employers on board from the earliest stages and making them co-owners of the relevant DPs, should provide a wealth of good practice which may prove to be sustainable. It would also be interesting to see, how far the rapidly approaching turn-over in management due to the ageing working population, is playing in favour of women and minorities who wish to develop a corporate career or aspire to senior positions in SMEs.

Thematic work focusing on vertical desegregation should not only cover career development and promotion strategies. NOW projects working with employers to establish positive action plans found that, in order to set quantitative targets for women's participation in senior management, it was necessary to build female expertise at the entrance levels and thus, gradually develop a critical mass of women in middle and senior management. Success factors and the impact of methodological approaches and tools that are planned by a number of DPs should be analysed and discussed in the ETG. This discussion might cover:

- the gender sensitive assessment of competencies, skills and needs;
- guidance, training and career development offers, plus itineraries to empowerment;
- tackling discriminatory pre-conceptions in enterprises;
- gender sensitive recruitment and promotion practices;
- mentoring schemes, benefiting both mentees and mentors;
- integrating gender and diversity concepts into quality control systems;
- training of experts with "bridging" functions such as equality counsellors, work-life-balance agents and intercultural mediators and strengthening their roles.

3.3. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Although the number of DPs committed to developing and applying gender mainstreaming systems or setting up positive actions in various contexts is larger than in Theme G, it would certainly not be wise to confine this category of thematic work to Theme H. As highlighted in the relevant part of the summary document for Theme G, it is important to make maximum use of this emerging pool of expertise. Gender equality is a transversal theme in EQUAL. DPs operating under other pillars and themes could benefit from a transversal ETG. Approaches, methodologies and procedures being developed under Themes H and G may not only prove useful across the other themes within EQUAL but may also enhance the integration of a gender dimension into other programming and implementation measures co-financed by the European Structural Funds. This could be particularly true for the European Social Fund whose regulations require that Member States apply gender mainstreaming to Community Support Frameworks and Operational Programmes, as well as to the selection of projects and to monitoring and evaluation.

Since gender mainstreaming DPs often seem to operate in combination with territorial approaches, there are also good prospects for the transfer of results and best practice and for the integration of new procedures into regional and local development. The transfer of EQUAL gender mainstreaming approaches to other policy areas should also be explored.

3.4. OPTIONS FOR THEMATIC CLUSTERING

The nature of two of the three options identified for European level thematic work suggest that this clustering should take place within Theme H.

Strengthening women's access and career development in the information and knowledge society

The considerations and the composition of any ETG focusing on horizontal desegregation in the NICT sector should not only include DPs concentrating on training and labour market integration of women in the IT occupations but others working in different sectors. Since the IT sector is increasingly interfacing with activities such as science, research and development, communications and media, marketing and commerce, engineering, transport and even health care and medicine, the work of the ETG must also benefit from the approaches and results of DPs which aim to open access and career opportunities for women in these sectors. The cluster should contain DPs that:

- offer computer and Internet initiation programmes for women of all age groups;
- concentrate on vocational information, counselling and guidance for girls and young women in primary and secondary schools and during transition;
- provide needs-tailored information, counselling and guidance to adult women;
- ensure that their vocational orientation provision satisfies the needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities and offers intercultural skills;
- train teachers, trainers, counselling, guidance and placements staff in order to integrate gender and diversity sensitive procedures into mainstream provisions;
- develop systemic approaches to combating gender and ethnic stereotyping;
- develop, test and implement innovative training, tailored to the needs of various female target groups, leading to sustainable employment in growth sectors;
- support women business creators, entrepreneurs and co-owners of family businesses to diversify their activities;
- enhance the capacity of authorities, training providers and enterprises to manage gender and diversity (skills and needs assessment, recruitment and promotion policies, HR development, positive action plans, work-life balance schemes);
- set-up and run regional or national desegregation observatories;
- forge inter-agency, territorial or sectoral coalitions committed to desegregation;
- introduce or apply gender mainstreaming systems to relevant sectors.

Vertical desegregation

The second option aims to break through the glass ceiling and provide access for women to management and senior decision-making positions in the business world and also in the context of local and regional development, in social partner organisations and politics. This requires that the cluster should include DPs that:

- support women to access entrance level and middle management;
- support the promotion of women to senior management and decision-making positions;
- develop and provide gender and diversity sensitive career development programmes including skills and needs assessments, counselling, guidance and networking;
- offer advanced management training;
- design and implement training programmes that make the maximum use of so-called typical female skills;
- run coaching and mentoring programmes;
- supply awareness raising and training packages to employers, authorities, HRD staff, social partner organisations and economic development agencies in order to bring about change in recruitment and promotion practices;
- are implemented by employers or clusters of companies with the intention to bridge skills gaps and develop equal opportunity policies;
- integrate a line of activity to design work-life balance schemes geared to the needs of women managers and dual-career couples;
- strengthen the managerial capacities of women entrepreneurs and co-owners of family businesses;
- set-up and run regional national desegregation observatories;
- forge inter-agency, territorial or sectoral coalitions committed to desegregation;
- introduce or apply gender mainstreaming systems to HDR policies in public and private sectors.

Gender Mainstreaming and Equal Opportunities

It is proposed that this third option should not be confined to Themes H and G, but become a transversal working group involving DPs from all other pillars and themes. This cluster could possibly include:

- Theme H and G DPs exclusively dedicated to developing and applying gender mainstreaming systems;
- Theme H and G DPs which concentrate on positive action in both public and private sectors and aim to enhance the capacity of authorities, enterprises and training institutions to manage gender and equality issues;
- DPs operating under Themes A , B and AS which aim to integrate the gender dimension and/or explore and develop synergies amongst gender and diversity strategies;
- Theme H and G DPs developing models that integrate gender and diversity into business excellence and quality management concepts;
- DPs working in the framework of the remaining themes focusing on quality control and management systems and HR development, including positive action for women and disadvantaged groups.

Possible theme H input to thematic work in other pillars

In order to strengthen the gender dimension and the application of gender mainstreaming across all pillars and themes, it is proposed to consider including Theme H DPs in other thematic clusters. Sub-themes and activities emerging from this first analysis suggest that this would be particularly meaningful for Themes A and B and, to an extent, for Theme C. The ETG operating under Theme A might benefit from DPs, which aim to tackle gender gaps in employment and provide specific support to groups with multiple disadvantages. The Theme H DPs with a clear focus on the needs of immigrant women and women from ethnic minorities could enhance the gender dimension of Theme B. A similar strategy might also be useful for Theme C, in particular, as a number of Member States have included support to women's business creation in the relevant part of their CIPs.

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOP

To ensure a maximum of synergies between European and national levels of thematic networking relevant to theme H, the workshop should result the production of a working structure for European thematic groups (ETGs) which allows for both consistency and complementarity between priority options chosen by Commission and Member States. The discussion should be led to include the following steps:

1. Mapping out the proposals for European level thematic work and the topics identified by Member States for national thematic networking to embark on a prioritising process that leads the selection of the topic to be addressed in this first round of European level thematic activities.
2. Defining the topic, including the various sub-themes or sub-topics that should be considered by the future working group;
3. Exploring possible links and synergies between the national networks and the ETG in relation to its topics and sub-topics. These should be designed so that the considerations of the ETG take due account of the day-to-day-realities of DPs, whilst capitalising on the successes of their outcomes. At the same time, these links should ensure that national networks and individual DPs can understand the purpose and be up-dated about the progress of work of the ETG, so that they have a real sense of involvement and can contribute more effectively to the European thematic outputs.
4. Collecting first ideas on methodological approaches to be adopted by the ETG, including Internet based communication and networking tools;

5. Considering the desirability of a transversal ETG focusing on gender mainstreaming and eventual theme H input to that group;
6. Clarifying the responsibilities that should be assumed by the Member States that are interested in pursuing the topic and wish to be involved in the ETG. In particular, the roles and tasks of Member States willing to act as co-ordinators or being prepared to lead work on any sub-topic, which has been identified, should be agreed. This includes practicalities such as hosting and servicing meetings.
7. Identifying the contacts that should be established with the following bodies or programmes, so that work on the chosen topic might be better informed and its outcomes more effectively disseminated and mainstreamed at European and national levels:
 - The 5th Community Framework Programme on Gender Equality (2001-2006)²²;
 - The Commission Expert Group on Gender and Employment²³;
 - The European Women's Lobby (EWL)²⁴.

²² http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/strategy_en.html

²³ <http://www.umist.ac.uk/management/ewerc/egge/egge.html>

²⁴ <http://www.womenlobby.org/>

THEME 5: ASYLUM SEEKERS

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

1.1. CURRENT POLICIES AT MEMBER STATE LEVEL

There are important variations in the Asylum Seekers (AS) policies across Member States which affect the right to work and access to vocational training programmes of AS that inform the activities that can be undertaken within the framework of EQUAL. Although a Community Initiative, EQUAL can only support DP activity which operates within existing national legislation.

1.1.1. The Right to Work

In five Member States - Denmark, France, Ireland²⁵, Italy, Luxembourg - AS are not entitled to seek employment during the full period of their asylum determination procedure. In some other Member States, AS are normally entitled to seek employment after their initial asylum application has been deemed admissible (for example, Greece and Portugal). A range of other conditions and restrictions apply in other Member States. Such restrictions include: a minimum number of months of residence (for example, 12 months in Germany, in Sweden applicants have immediate access to the labour market if the relevant Authority believes that his/her procedure will last more than 4 months); the need to verify that a job offer cannot be filled by a national or a legal resident (Finland and Spain); limiting employment to specific sectors or number of hours per week or days per month (Finland and the Netherlands).

1.1.2. Access to Vocational Training Programmes

With the exception of Austria, France, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom, all Member States offer state-funded language tuition for AS²⁶. Without exception, all the Member States also allow or require the children of AS to enter into compulsory school education.

State-supported training programmes for AS are currently implemented in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. In Denmark, the government sub-contracts work and school-related training activities to private firms and educational institutes. All AS aged between 17 and 25 are offered at least ten hours of vocational training each week. In Finland, work and training activities are organised at reception centres. Asylum Seekers who refuse to participate in these activities may have their living allowance reduced. In Sweden, all adult AS living in residence centres must participate in organised activities for at least 20 hours a week.

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are active in all Member States in the provision of different forms of vocational training.

1.2. FLOWS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS: PATTERNS ACROSS THE EU

The activities of EQUAL need to be seen in the context of the overall pattern of AS in the EU. The nature and scale of issues addressed by the theme vary within the EU. Both the levels of asylum applications and the rates of recognition are uneven across the EU.

²⁵ However, in 1999, Ireland's Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform granted the right to work to those asylum-seekers who had been in the country for more than 12 months, and who had entered the country before 26 July 1999.

²⁶ In Italy language tuition is offered in some cases by local authorities, while in Ireland there is no "automatic right" to such tuition.

The major characteristics of asylum applications in the EU are:

- Approximately 400,000 new asylum applications are lodged in the EU each year. The time taken to process applications is prolonged and hence the numbers of AS awaiting determinations is well in excess of this figure. The average numbers of persons involved in each application is 1.6.
- More than three quarters of the applications are made in five Member States (the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France).
- Recognition rates in Member States under the Geneva Convention criteria range from 1% to 35%; some decrease in recognition is apparent for some member states.
- The main countries of origin of AS vary greatly according to Member State and are influenced by historical, geographical and cultural factors. However the EU as a whole is affected by developments in particular countries. For example, in 2001 Iraq generated over 10% of the total asylum flows in the EU, Afghanistan over 8% and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia around 4%
- New forms of demand for protection, which do not readily comply with the criteria of the Geneva Convention, (notably demands resulting from the conflicts in the Balkans), have increased in recent years and subsidiary forms of protection have been granted by Member States.
- Criminal networks have been able to exploit the diversity of applicable rules and enforcement mechanisms among the Member States (a phenomenon often referred to as "asylum shopping") leading to an increase in human trafficking.

Typically AS arrive in the host country traumatised, concerned about those they have left behind and lacking language skills and knowledge of the host country. They are likely to face a prolonged wait for their case to be determined during which they have only very limited means to sustain themselves. The DP address these needs in a variety of ways.

1.3. EU POLICY CONTEXT

Given the varied national policies and the wide-ranging aims of EQUAL the moves at the EU level to promote greater harmonisation on immigration and asylum policy and legal instruments are relevant. It is intended that this harmonisation will lead to faster and more efficient decisions on asylum applications so reducing the risk that asylum is used as means of economic migration and the tendency for secondary movements of AS after they have entered the EU embarking on so-called 'asylum shopping'.

The proposed Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is to include in the first phase the following five 'building blocks':

- A clear and workable determination of the State responsible for the examination of an asylum application,
- Common standards for a fair and efficient asylum procedure,
- Common minimum conditions of reception for AS
- Approximation of rules on the recognition and content of refugee status
- Subsidiary forms of protection offering an appropriate status to any person in need of such protection.

It is anticipated that, in the second phase of the CEAS, a Single Asylum Procedure will be adopted at the EU level, as well as uniform status, bringing together the Geneva Convention and subsidiary protection statuses.

With regard to entry to the labour market the European Council has suggested in its proposal for a Directive on the reception of AS that:

"Member States shall determine a period of time, starting from the date on which an application for asylum has been lodged, during which an applicant shall not have access to the labour market. If a decision in first instance has not been taken one year after the presentation of an application for asylum and this delay cannot be attributed to the applicant, Member States shall authorise access to the labour market for the applicant subject to the conditions laid down by the Member States. Access to the labour market shall not be withdrawn during appeals

procedures, where an appeal against a negative decision in a regular procedure has suspensive effect, until such time as a negative decision on the appeal is notified."

The same proposal suggests that AS are allowed access to vocational training. At the time of drafting this paper political agreement has been reached on the draft Directive, and subject to adoption by the European Parliament the Directive should be formally adopted during May 2002. The draft Directive specifies that Member States have 24 months for transposition - which means that by May 2004 Member States will be required to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the Directive.

Such harmonisation is considered as likely to improve current situation where, as a consequence of the employment restrictions in some Member States and the often cumbersome procedures only a small number of Asylum Seekers are legally employed. Access to illegal employment and low paid work not meeting basic employment standards is a possible consequence.

The socio-professional integration of AS does not currently form part of the European Employment Strategy (EES).

1.4. OTHER EU PROGRAMMES

The main EU programmes that concern AS are:

- The European Refugee Fund (ERF), and
- The action programme for administrative co-operation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration (ARGO)

The European Refugee Fund

The ERF was established in 2000. It has a budget of 216 million euros for the period 2001-2004. The ERF aims to support and encourage the activities of Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving AS, refugees and displaced persons.

The three main types of Member States' actions supported by the ERF are:

- Conditions for reception
- Integration of persons whose stay in the Member States is of a lasting and/or stable nature.
- Repatriation provided that the persons concerned have not acquired a new nationality and have not left the territory of the Member State.

The ERF also supports on the initiative of the EC (DG Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)) innovatory actions or actions of interest to the Community as a whole. Some 20 ERF Community Actions have been approved so far for 2000 and 2001 that include various networking activities, awareness raising and information campaigns, and studies on legislation, policy and practice relevant to one of the three ERF types of action. Prior to the establishment of the ERF the Commission funded directly a similar range of activities through various budget lines.

Action programme for administrative co-operation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration (ARGO)

The objective of ARGO is to reinforce the effectiveness of the relevant procedures in the field of asylum, visas, immigration and the control of external borders to assist the national administrations in the implementation of the relevant Community legislation.

It is expected that the decision establishing ARGO will be adopted by the Council in May 2002. The ARGO programme is managed by DG JHA.

1.5. OTHER EUROPEAN NETWORKING ACTIVITY

The ETG will need to take account of and engage with relevant European networking activities involving NGOs. In the case of AS this includes the work of *The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)*. ECRE is the main European level organiser of co-operation activities among NGO concerned with Asylum Seekers and refugees. ECRE's principal activities include: policy

development and research; advocacy; legal analysis; information services to members; and networking and capacity-building in South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe.

ECRE is engaged in the promotion of and participation in projects on asylum policy and refugee integration supported by the EU. Further details are provided in Annex 1.

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS.

2.1. THE KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED BY EQUAL AND THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The objectives of the Member State Community Initiative Programmes (CIP) for EQUAL elaborate the priorities for the AS Theme. In particular:

- Most CIP include social as well as labour market integration objectives. These objectives include: improving the 'personal situation' (Austria) the 'quality of reception' (France, Belgium, Italy) 'living conditions' (Greece) and 'social integration' (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Portugal); and providing support to AS to 'play a role in society and manage their own lives' (Finland) and to cope 'with socio-cultural norms' (Spain).
- Two CIP emphasise objectives to combat discrimination against AS and to improve community relations through 'educating people about the needs of Asylum Seekers' (Finland) and promoting and developing an 'antiracist and intercultural approach' (Ireland).
- Three CIP include objectives that highlight the needs of particular groups of Asylum Seekers: 17-25 year olds and women (Denmark); 17-24 year olds (Finland); and, 'under age' asylum seekers (Netherlands). The activities identified in the French CIP explicitly distinguish between Asylum Seekers (AS) and those admitted under humanitarian evacuation programmes.

2.2. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES RELATING TO PRIORITIES IN CIPS

A wide range of activities is identified in the CIPs around half of which are particular to one CIP. The activities can be classified into four groups. First, those concerning the reception of AS in the host country. Second, those concerned with integration of AS and those who have received refugee status into the labour market. Third, those that are concerned with assisting returnees. Finally, those oriented towards the infrastructure to assist AS. The activities most frequently cited in the CIP are: language training (7 Member States); vocational guidance and advice on labour market orientation (6); Mental health and psycho-social support (4); education and training for the country of origin (4); recognition/validation of skills competencies and qualifications (4); and, awareness raising within the wider community.

Although there is a relatively small number of DPs, around three quarters of the activities identified in the CIPs are being taken forward by one or more DP. However, some activities identified in the CIPs will not be taken forward by the DPs in particular countries including: identifying the needs of traumatised AS, improved support of young AS, legal support, skills audits and studies and evaluation. Member States may want to consider the implications of this in preparation for the second round of EQUAL in 2004.

2.3. THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

46 EQUAL DP have received funding for Action 1 within the AS Theme. Table 1 below shows the range of activities pursued by these DP. According to the generic list of activities recorded in the ECDB the majority of activities of the DP in the AS Theme provide assistance to persons, in particular: Training; Guidance, counselling; and, Integrated measures. The three most frequently occurring activities concerning support to structures are: Awareness raising, information, publicity; Guidance and social services; and Conception for training programmes, certification. The majority of the DPs are oriented towards reception and integration of AS rather than the needs of returnees.

2.4. ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Innovation is a key issue in EQUAL and the DPs have identified 54 activities as being particularly innovative. The activity most frequently cited (4 Member States) is new combinations of theoretical educational and practical testing/vocational training. The other area where innovation is stressed is in terms of the involvement of new actors in activities concerned with support to the socio-professional integration of AS. By and large these activities identified as innovative by DPs are likely to be innovative in their own context rather than innovative at the European level

The average number of partners for each DP in the AS theme is just over 8. However, there is a wide variation between the average numbers of partners in each Member State. Indeed the countries with the largest numbers of DP range from an average of 19 partners in Germany to an average of 3 partners per DP in France.

So far it has not been possible to identify with precision which policies/activities are anticipated to be candidates for mainstreaming either into national or European policy/programmes. The information available on the DP does however identify the main processes through which it is envisaged that mainstreaming takes place. These include in order of importance: involving policy makers in the DP (cited by DP from 10 Member States); involving public agencies who themselves have close contacts with policy makers in the DPs (8); and through transnational thematic networking amongst DP (5). (Table A in Annex 2).

It is envisaged that the mainstreaming work at DP level will be complemented by national thematic networking activity that will validate the results of DPs and the work of ETG at the European Level. However as there are only 46 DP within the AS theme and in 7 Member States there is only one DP, the low number of DP may limit the usefulness of thematic networking at Member State level within the AS Theme. In this respect the activities of DP are relevant to the policy domains of a wide range of government agencies, especially JHA. It will be important to involve them in ETG work in the Theme.

Regarding the AS Theme there are several cross cutting issues within EQUAL:

- There are similarities between some DP within the AS Theme and those within Theme 1B (combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market)
- A number of the DP in the AS Theme are concerned with enabling the development of entrepreneurial skills amongst AS with a view to them being applied in their countries of origin and some of the labour market integration measures concern the social economy. Thus there are links with both Theme 2C Entrepreneurship -business creation and Theme 2D Entrepreneurship – social economy.
- AS are identified as a target group of DP within other themes.
- There may be relevant good practice lessons which come from the DP in other themes dealing with refugees

As far as the horizontal issues within EQUAL are concerned there are three aspects that emerge from the analysis of the prospective activities of DP.

Firstly, empowerment has a special relevance to DP in the AS Theme. AS have very few rights and may experience restrictions over their freedom of movement, they may lack language skills and knowledge of the host country, they may be traumatised and are thus particularly vulnerable. In these circumstances empowerment may be furthered by access to information on basic human rights, the provision of interpretation facilities and mediators as well as the engagement of AS in the organisation of the DP.

Secondly, the local dimension is important to DP within the AS Theme. There is a tendency for AS to concentrate in particular localities, often as a consequence of communities from the country of origin existing in these areas. This may create pressures on local services and/or provide a basis for local development where there is high labour demand. A number of DP in the

AS Theme stress their contribution to regional economic development objectives and several include Local Authorities as key actors.

Thirdly, several DP are proposing to apply Information and communications technologies (ICT) to improve access to information pertinent to the needs of AS or to assist with vocational training. A number of DP in the AS Theme include in their portfolio of activities the development of ICT skills.

The formation of ETG needs to take into account the potential contribution of DP in the AS Theme to contribute to these horizontal issues.

Table 1 -The activities being pursued by the DP

<p>Reception</p>	<p>Advice, education and training</p>
<p><u>Key activities</u> : Mental health and psycho-social support Improve facilities</p> <p><u>Processes</u>: New clearance structures, quicker processes</p> <p><u>Services and information</u>: Translation and interpretation Information on migration Promotion of equal opportunities in access to and use of support services Legal support to Improve the legal standing of AS</p> <p><u>Other</u>: Celebrate cultural background Debates among AS about xenophobia or discrimination encountered in the labour market</p>	<p><u>Advice</u>: Vocational guidance/advice & labour market orientation Counselling</p> <p><u>Training</u>: Language, basic skills, IT. Develop appropriate education and training: modular programme; schools based family learning; ensure training is accessible</p> <p><u>Recognition/validation of skills and qualifications</u> Develop tools for skills assessment</p> <p><u>Other</u> : Promotion of school leaving certificates Voluntary work to supplement language and vocational training</p>
<p>Employment</p>	<p>Capacity building</p>
<p><u>Job search</u>: Improve the work of the employment service Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate support</p> <p><u>Transition to work</u>: Test approaches to swift transition to labour market once refugee status has been granted Job placements Employment support schemes promoting job opportunities</p> <p><u>Other</u>: Promote bilingualism in business Information on using IT Empowering AS to become more self reliant and less dependent on existing support service</p>	<p><u>Awareness raising</u>: - within wider community, and politicians - Multi-cultural training for staff working with AS - among employers & social partners Information for staff on legal procedures & available services</p> <p><u>Networking</u> of existing support structures within member states - European level exchanges of staff</p> <p><u>Other</u>: Studies, monitoring and evaluation Develop tool for skills assessment</p>

<p>Repatriation</p>
<p>Help for reintegration in country of origin Education and training Develop skills to start a business Job matching in third country or country of origin</p>

3. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS (ETG)

The workshops in Barcelona will launch ETG, discuss the main trends and policy priorities at EU level and identify priority issues to be addressed by the ETG.

The following points can be stressed from the above discussion:

- There are important differences between Member States in the regulations affecting the entry of Asylum Seekers to the labour market. (Section 1).
- The EU driven policy context is likely to lead to a closer harmonisation of regulations affecting Asylum Seekers. (Section 1). EQUAL DP have the potential to develop tools which will help prepare for these changes.
- The EU has supported through in particular the ERF a number of activities with similar objectives to EQUAL DP, albeit activities that do not necessarily have a strong labour market orientation. This body of activity is a potential source of good practice lessons. (Section 1).
- There is relevant networking activity at the EU level involving NGO and institutions, most of which is supported by the EU. (Section 1).
- There are strong commonalities in the needs of AS in different Member States particularly when flows of AS from particular countries affect many Member States simultaneously. (Section 1).
- It is envisaged in the CIP of several Member States that the EQUAL projects will cover a wide range of services for Asylum Seekers. (Section 2). This range relates to the activities of a large number of different public agencies.
- There are only 46 DP within the AS Theme. In 7 Member States there is only one DP. Although there is a strong role for results to be validated nationally, the low number of DP potentially limits the usefulness of thematic networking at Member State level within the AS Theme. (Section 2). This could lead to the need for an early and comprehensive comparison of good practice across the EU led by the ETG.
- The majority of the activities anticipated in the CIP are being pursued by the selected DP. In addition there are a number of new, mainly detailed, activities not foreseen in the CIP that are taking place. (Section 2).
- The activity most frequently cited as innovative (4 Member States) is new combinations of theoretical educational and practical testing/vocational training. The other area where innovation is stressed is in terms of the involvement of new actors in activities concerned with support to the socio professional integration of AS. (Section 2). Most DP activities are innovative in their context rather than innovative at the European level.
- The information available on the DP identifies the main processes through which it is envisaged that mainstreaming takes place. These include, in order of importance: involving policy makers in the DP; involving public agencies who themselves have close contacts with policy makers in the DP; and, through transnational thematic networking amongst DP. (Section 2.). The activities of DP are relevant to the policy domains of a wide range of government agencies, especially JHA ministries. It will be important to involve such agencies in the work of the ETG.
- There are three cross cutting issues between the AS Theme and other themes within EQUAL. These concern in particular the Theme 1B (combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market) and Theme 2C and Theme 2B entrepreneurship (Section 2).
- The activities of DP in the AS theme are especially pertinent to the horizontal issues of empowerment, ICT and local development (Section 2).

When considering the work of the ETG we need to consider its role and the context. The primary objectives are: to identify good practice across the AS Theme; to consider how it compares with non-EQUAL activity which is being funded; to identify how activity in the AS Theme fits with emerging EU policy; and, to develop an effective dissemination strategy.

In addition the work must be informed by the work of the DPs and must take account of the role of the Member States in validating good practice.

Having set out the policy backdrop and identified the issues being addressed the following sections provide a focus for the work of the ETG.

3.1. POTENTIAL TO HELP IMPLEMENT EU POLICY.

There is clear potential for the work of the EQUAL DPs to develop good practice that could inform the way in which Member States implement elements of the EU-wide harmonisation of Asylum Seekers policy. The area which is likely to be most fruitful is the articles in Directive (CM(2001)181) which relate to access to the labour market and vocational training. Although most of the sub-themes have a bearing on the overall policy, in order to maximise the impact, the ETG will need to identify the types of products and processes which are likely to be most relevant and transferable. These could for example include innovative education and training packages.

3.2. POTENTIAL CLUSTERS AND SUB THEMES FOR THE ETG

The analysis of the activities of DP and the associated issues affecting AS in the EU suggests that the prospective ETG could cluster its work in a number of ways, in particular there may be merit in organising ETG work around six 'sub themes' or areas:

- The reception of AS with particular emphasis on the, language, vocational and labour market issues related to particular countries from where high numbers of AS are originating and applying for asylum in several Member States.
- The integration of AS into employment and the avoidance of illicit employment in the host country.
- The access of AS to vocational training, and the application of innovative vocational training packages.
- The reintegration of AS into the labour markets in their country of origin.
- The recognition and validation of the skills/qualifications of AS within the EU and particular Member States.
- The capacity of organisations to address the needs of AS and the involvement of key actors including social partners.

In addition consideration could be given to focusing on an area concerned with influencing public attitudes towards AS as this an objective stressed in the EQUAL plans and by several DP.

On the basis of the emphasis given in the CIP and through the activities of the DP there is a case for priority being given to the sub theme concerned with vocational guidance and training packages. The workshops in Barcelona will provide an opportunity to consider these possibilities.

3.3. PARTNERSHIPS - HOW DOES EQUAL FIT WITH OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITY AND WHO ELSE NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

When considering aspects of innovation, good practice and mainstreaming it will be important for the ETG to take account of the other relevant activity that is pursuing objectives similar to the CIP and DP within the AS Theme. This includes the activities of government agencies and NGO.

It should also take account of any relevant good practice that has already emerged from similar activities funded by other EU programmes such as the ERF and at the Member State level. For example, the existing good practice guides on employment and vocational training that have been produced by ECRE which while focused primarily on recognised refugees, may offer a range of experiences and recommendations of direct value to the socio-professional integration of AS authorised to work.

It would be useful to consider the strategies that are being put in place within the Member States to enable the DPs to work effectively with the varied organisations that have a stake in this work. This collaboration should enable the relatively small number of DPs to have a strong impact within the Member States.

In addition the ETG should consider whether any Europeans level organisation besides ECRE need to be involved in the ETG to ensure that is it able to take account of similar work.

3.4. IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICE

One of the key tasks of the ETG is to identify good practice across the EU. A grid is included in the mainstreaming paper to sift aspects of good practice. This will complement work at the national level that reviews the activities of individual DPs. Given that there is a relatively small number of DPs in the AS Theme the work at the EU level may be particularly important.

Assessing innovation across the EU is an important feature of the work of the ETG. There are likely to be innovative activities in each of the 'clusters' or sub themes identified above. For example, skills audits, vocational training policies, curricula and delivery methods tailored to the particular needs of AS are at an embryonic stage. It is anticipated that DP will develop vocational training tools with wide applicability in the EU and that these will be innovative. These include packages targeted on both AS granted refugee status and rejected AS reintegrating in their countries of origin.

It will be helpful for the ETG to consider how best to assess the usefulness and transferability of such tools. Potential criteria include: is their usefulness greatest when for example, there are flows of AS from a particular country into several Member States?

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS

1. **Impact on EU policy:** What are the areas of policy in which EQUAL can expect to impact? What type of products and processes being developed by the DPs are most likely to help inform the implementation of EU policy ?

2. **Clusters:** Do the sub themes identified above provide a logical basis for structuring the work of the ETG and in particular identifying good practice? Are there other relevant activities that fall outside the scope of these clusters?

3. **EQUAL In the wider context:** What approaches have Member States adopted to ensure that EQUAL takes account of other similar developments? Who is involved? Who else needs to be involved in the ETG?

4. **Identification of good practice:** taking account of the common issues already identified for all ETGs what are the other key features of good practice which relate to AS? How will this be assessed?

5. **Limited scale of the AS Theme.** Given the relatively small number of AS DPs within each Member State, in what way might the ETG take advantage from this?

6 **Cross cutting and horizontal issues.** How should the ETG for the AS Theme link with the activities of other ETG to cover cross cutting and horizontal issues?

7 **Performance measurement.** What are the key success criteria of the ETG?

ANNEX 1 EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES [ECRE]

ECRE is an umbrella organisation of 72 refugee-assisting NGO agencies in 28 countries working towards fair and humane policies for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. ECRE's principal activities include policy development and research, advocacy, legal analysis, information services to members, networking, and capacity building in South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe.

ELENA (The European Legal Network on Asylum)

ELENA was established by ECRE as a forum for legal practitioners who aim to promote the highest standards of human rights in the treatment of refugees, Asylum Seekers and other persons in need of international protection. The ELENA network aims in particular:

- To provide and reinforce contacts between practising lawyers and legal counsellors in different European countries who work on asylum cases;
- To facilitate the exchange of information and experience between these lawyers and legal counsellors;
- To study the implementation of national and international law relating to refugees;
- To organise seminars on specific topics relating to refugee law and making results available to practising lawyers;
- To promote the development of national networks of lawyers specialising in asylum law.

ELENA maintains close co-operation with the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the UNHCR.

Networking on Integration

Since 1997 ECRE has worked through a number of its member agencies leading on specialist themes and networking with European funding. This work has contributed to the identification of new methods of working and have facilitated a better understanding of useful policy frameworks and of the elements of good practice in the selected themes. Information is available on www.ecre.org/erfproject and on www.refugeenet.org, although the latter is no longer active. Issues covered include: Education; Vocational training; Language tuition; Health; Elderly Refugees; Traumatized Refugees; Housing; Community and Culture; Reception; Voluntary return. The main activities and outputs from the networking to date include:

- ECRE's position on the integration of refugees
- A database on existing Integration Activities within many of the above thematic areas;
- A series of Good Practice Guides on Refugee Integration, which give examples of practical and transferable solutions to obstacles to refugee integration in different Member States.
- Work on refugee perceptions of integration
- The organisation of EU conferences and meetings of NGOs.

An existing project, managed by ECRE and supported by the ERF Community Action on "*Good Practice in the Reception and Integration of Refugees: Analysing new approaches in Policy and Practice*" which looks at Educational advice; Elderly refugees; Traumatized refugees. Included in the ECRE project is the following initiative:

("POLIS Asyl") Co-operation with Local Authorities.

POLIS Asyl is a network activity is being developed by the Italian Refugee Council (CIR) concerning Co-operation with Local Authorities. It brings together the asylum/refugees affairs officers of 12 European municipalities with a view to discussing:

- National legislation;
- The competencies of the municipalities in the different member States with regard to the provision of assistance to Asylum Seekers and refugees;
- Examples of activities and good practice in the different member cities of POLIS Asyl;
- Examples of different funding schemes, particularly as regards funding arrangements between central government and local authorities;
- Other policy strategies;
- The relationship between local authorities and NGOs operating in the member cities.

ANNEX 2 - TABLE A - THE MAINSTREAMING PROCESSES ENVISAGED BY THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Aspect	Mainstreaming processes	AT	Belg	Beltr	DK	FI	FR	DE	GR	IE	IT	LU	NL	PT	ES	SE	UK	Total			
Structure and composition of DP	Mainstreaming into national policy making by including policy makers within the DP	•	•		•			•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	11			
	Mainstreaming into national policy making by including public agencies with close contacts to policy makers within the DP	•	•	•				•	•	•			•	•	•			9			
	Through refugee councils that are well integrated into national policy making on AS issues participating in DP																•	1			
	One DP partner participating in another DP which will promote exchange of good practice between DPs																	•	1		
Links and networking at national level	Transfer of new models for work & study activities to other reception centres in the country and to the rest of society					•												•	2		
	Working group developing recommendations and advocacy for incorporation of good practice in national asylum policy								•										1		
	DP working towards political implementation of legal & professional principles underlying the provision of its offered qualifications								•										1		
	DP links to the Cross-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees & Asylum Seekers to ensure lessons fed to policy makers																		•	1	
	Participation of DP members in national policy forum																		•	1	
	Framework for exerting pressure on national policy									•										1	
	Contribution to policy making at national & transnational level										•									1	
	Participation of professionals from administration & law, health & advisory centres, and political & professional associations in support of the DP project for regional and									•										1	
Transnational Networking and links	Transnational networking with DP transnational partners and through thematic networking	•			•			•							•	•			5		
	Using a "dynamic partnership model" ensuring exchange of information and lesson between DP members																		•	1	
	Lobbying at European level on matters of reception & integration														•					1	
	Exchange experience across the DP in order to be able to adapt local procedures to good practice in partner member states									•										1	
	Transfer of new models for work & study activities to other EU countries					•														1	
Specific Activities	Electronic dissemination of project information nationally and transnationally								•		•									2	
	Conference for discussing white paper with representatives of local government, political parties, welfare organisations, foreigners and the public.								•											1	
	European conference									•										1	
	New teaching methods used with AS are to be disseminated by the National Board of Education																	•		1	
	Creation of knowledge bank of DP projects & lessons at transnational level				•															1	
	Production of a publication by the asylum seekers about experiences acquired during the project												•								1
	Contributing a white paper on the situation of AS, civil war & de-facto refugees									•											1
Total																				28	

Note:

There was no information available about mainstreaming in the French project descriptions and no public authorities or policy makers were involved, which would have allowed for indirect mainstreaming through the composition of the DP.