EQUAL Guide for Development Partnerships

Learning from the experience of EQUAL partnerships

European Commission

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EQUAL partnerships

Employment & social affairs

The EQUAL Guide For Development Partnerships was written by a Working Group comprising experts from several Member States (Sweden, France, Belgium, Portugal, United Kingdom, Austria, Ireland) and the European Commission services with the help of an external consultant, Mrs Leda Stott.

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

An electronic version of this Guide is available on the EQUAL website http://europa.eu.int/comm/equal.

If you are interested in receiving the electronic newsletter "ESmail" from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, please send an e-mail to empl-esmail@cec.eu.int. The newsletter is published on a regular basis in English, French and German.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (http://europa.eu.int).

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1. Introduction to the EQUAL Guide for Development Partnerships

This collection of briefs is designed to offer guidance on the development of successful EQUAL Development and Transnational Partnerships. It is based on the outcomes of a short learning project with a group of eight Development Partnerships (DPs) from across Europe that aimed to:

• identify key areas of relevance for the development of successful partnerships,

• explore preliminary learning experiences about partnership, and

• make recommendations for other EQUAL partnerships.

Through the formation of a **Partnership Learning Group**, DPs were encouraged to reflect upon the issues and challenges they faced during the processes of preparatory work, initiation, development and testing, mainstreaming and preparation for further action.

Defining success

Central to the learning project was the need to arrive at an understanding of what "success" means for EQUAL partnerships. The project addressed this issue by seeking to assess the **benefits of a partnership approach** as the best way to achieve EQUAL goals. This involved examining the value of the partnership for:

• **partner organisations** - how different partners gain from working together in partnership;

• **people who are disadvantaged in the labour market and other stakeholder groups** - how far outcomes of project activities for target groups and the wider community are recognised as being effective and sustainable; and

• **policy level and institutional change** - how far project activities are having an impact on institutions, and being mainstreamed into employment and social inclusion policies to ensure long-term impact and integration.

Acknowledgement and understanding of "mistakes" and/or "failures" and ensuring that other partnerships learn from these is important in identifying success factors. By exploring both what worked, and what did not, the project sought to tease out what specific issues and challenges emerge dur-

ing the creation and development of EQUAL partnerships and what strategies might work best to deal with these.

Partnership learning

The project examined learning experiences that were considered to be of most importance to the DPs involved in the project as they developed their partnerships. As a result the findings are not exhaustive and do not include all possible partnership-building issues and challenges. At the same time the tools and techniques that are suggested in this booklet are not the only possibilities for working in partnership. DPs may develop and use other methods that have not been examined here and that are equally valid for addressing partnership issues. It is also important to note that the project concentrated particularly on the processes of preparatory work, initiation, and development and testing.

On-going research, which further explores mainstreaming and preparation for further action, as well as more detailed investigation into some of the issues raised, will enable greater insight into EQUAL partnerships and contribute to their effectiveness.

The eight DPs that were chosen to participate in the project came from seven different countries. The primary aim in choosing them was to ensure that each country which submitted a project was represented, all the EQUAL themes were covered and the partnerships offered variety in terms of partner numbers and sectors. They included:

• **Austria: RepaNet - Reparaturnetzwerk Österreich (AT-3-08/135)**

Aims to bond social and labour market policy strategies with environmental policy by opening up higher profile fields of business to those segregated from the employment market, particularly in the field of appliance reuse and repair.

• **Belgium: Décrire (BEfr-20)**

Established to assist workers who have suffered collective redundancies in Wallonia by offering redeployment guidance and support to assist their reintegration into the labour force. Works principally with trade unions which are key actors in supporting these workers.

- **France: De la précarité à l'emploi durable (FR-BRE-2001-10825)**

Aims to provide an innovative response for the professional insertion of fragile groups into the labour market by working with training centres and a temping company. Priority groups are provided with employment training, literacy and language skills, and professional support through workshops and sponsored activities.

- **Ireland: Equal at Work - The Dublin Employment Pact (IE-15)**

A Dublin-wide initiative involving 48 partners from different sectors who are working to develop new and more inclusive models of recruitment and in-work progression in order to break entrenched patterns of labour market exclusion and long-term unemployment. They also seek to contribute to the development of an open and diverse employment culture in Dublin.

- **Ireland: Sonas DP Ireland Ltd. (IE-21)**

Aims to improve the quality of life for select groups of asylum seekers at identifiable phases of the asylum determination process and, in so doing, to contribute to the development of best humanitarian practice. Through outreach services and information provision a better quality of life is promoted for asylum seekers from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

- **Portugal: Públicos Diferentes. Iguais Oportunidades (PT-2001-310)**

Works for a comprehensive approach to difficulties experienced by the most vulnerable groups of the population in entering the labour market with particular emphasis on promoting positive images of socially responsible companies and socially devalued occupations.

- **Sweden: Diversity in Västernorrland (SE-57)**

Seeks to raise the awareness of groups such as senior citizens, disabled people, long-term unemployed, minorities and people with long-term illness, and encourage their integration into the labour market in a county with a declining labour supply due to an ageing population and emigration.

- **Great Britain: JIVE (Joint Interventions) Partners (UKgb-35)**

Works to break down gender segregation in the engineering, construction and technology sectors by developing and piloting new approaches that tackle the multiple barriers preventing women from pursuing careers in these sectors. In particular addressing the need for cultural change in the sectors of education and training.

Additional information was also gathered from other DPs such as:

- **Portugal: ConVidas (PT-2001-164) (Permanent Platform for Reconciliation)**

- **Portugal: Mudança de Maré (PT-2001-230)**

- **Italy: SONAR (IT-IT-G-PIE-012)**

Methodology

Central to the project methodology was the use of an **Action Learning Approach** that based inquiry and learning on experience and action, drew on the knowledge and experience of the participants and emphasised reflection and analysis:

Research into partnership resource materials

Relevant materials from EQUAL and the eight DPs, as well as other sources, were used to ascertain what key issues and themes were important to explore during the project. This process also enabled the identification of key supporting resources for EQUAL partnerships.

Introductory Meeting

At the start of the project a meeting was held to enable the DP representatives involved to meet and obtain a clear idea of the project and what would be expected of them. A preliminary learning exercise to identify key issues during the preparatory, initiation, and development and testing phases of partnership-building was carried out, as well as establishing ground rules for working together virtually.

E-learning network

An e-learning network was established with the DPs. This involved each of them identifying a key issue or challenge faced during partnership development, outlining how it was approached and stating what worked and/or what did not and why they thought that this was so. This material was summarised and shared on a fortnightly basis.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to examine how the selected DPs dealt with key issues during their work. Responses were followed up with telephone conversations to explore particular issues with each partnership individually.

Partnership Workshop

A workshop was held in which the DPs discussed and reflected upon the learning experiences, and carried out a series of group exercises to identify skills needed for partnership-building, explore innovative approaches to key challenges and suggest tips for other EQUAL partnerships.

Selected development partnerships

COUNTRIES	Austria RepaNet	Belgium Décrire	France De la pré-carité à l'emploi durable	Ireland Dublin Employment Pact	Ireland Sonas DP Ireland Ltd.	Portugal Públicos Diferentes. Iguais Oportunida-des	Sweden Diversity in Västernorr-land	Great Britain JIVE (Joint Interven-tions) Partners
EQUAL themes								
Employability			X			X	X	
Entrepreneurship	X		X					
Adaptability		X	X	X				
Equal Opps. Gender								X
Asylum seekers					X			
No. of members								
1 to 4		X						
5 to 10			X		X	X		X
11 to 20	X						X	X
20+				X				
Sectors from which members are drawn								
Private		X		X			X	
Public	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
NGO	X		X	X	X		X	X
Social	X	X		X	X		X	X
Other				X		X		
Wider linkages								
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

2. Partnership learning processes and skills

Partnership-building involves five key processes – preparatory work, initiation, development and testing, mainstreaming and planning for further action, all of which require specific skills. Besides "hard" technical skills there is also a need for a range of "soft" skills, including interpersonal and team-building abilities, that are less visible but just as important. Partnerships should assess their skills capacity by identifying strengths and weaknesses, and ascertaining whether external training may be needed in particular areas.

Preparatory work: getting the basics right

"The preparatory work is not just the first process – it is the most important."

Preparatory work is crucial to the development of a solid and effective partnership. It involves careful research into the context in which the partnership seeks to operate and identification of the most appropriate EQUAL theme/s to address. A clear understanding of EQUAL is important for this process, as is an examination of prior partnership experiences in the chosen area. Identifying, selecting and engaging partners by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of potential contributions from different groups is key to this phase. It is also important to identify wider stakeholders and relevant connections to on-going local, national and regional change processes that will inform mainstreaming work from the start. Those persons that are involved in the partnership would benefit at this stage from having the following skills.

Key skills for preparatory work

ASSIMILATION	Dealing with bureaucracy; understanding meanings; discerning between what is said and what is meant.
AWARENESS-RAISING	Sharing experience of initiative work, theme, working with EQUAL Managing Authorities, National Support Structures (NSSs) etc.
BROKERING	Bringing partners together.
CAPACITY-BUILDING	Assisting, training and supporting partners who lack skills, finance or confidence to work in partnership so that they are able to work more efficiently and effectively.
COMMUNICATION	Listening to others; clearly communicating the case for partnership.
FACILITATION	Managing early discussion between different potential partners both internally and externally.
LEADERSHIP	Being a subtle leader; having sensitivity and awareness, and an open and inclusive attitude.
MOTIVATING	Encouraging engagement; giving an exciting vision of what is possible; energising.
NETWORKING	Identifying potential partners; mainstreaming possibilities and wider stakeholders.
PERSUASION	Finding arguments to encourage potential partners.
RESEARCH	Prospecting; selecting new partners through positive and negative criteria research; "big picture mapping" of wider context.
TIME MANAGEMENT	Keeping things on track; allowing a balance for experimentation and inquiry with practical tasks.

Initiation: ensuring commitment and equity of involvement

"All effective partnerships are win-win alliances based on delivering a practical programme of mutual benefit."

Partners prepare the ground for working together and securing each other's commitment. Partner representatives constantly meet to discuss and review issues in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the partnership's core principles, goals and objectives. At the same time methods for enhancement of participation of different groups and the establishment of clear structures and decision-making processes are important. Roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the work are allocated and an agreement to co-operate is secured. At this particular stage the skills listed below are helpful.

Key skills for initiation

COMMUNICATION	Conducting open dialogue in order to build trust; discussing all aspects of the work; reviewing and revising where necessary and sharing information among all partners.
CO-ORDINATION	Setting up clear guidelines and structures; allocating roles and responsibilities; using methodologies based upon clearly defined tools.
DECISION-MAKING	Making democratic choices about how decisions will be made.
DIPLOMACY	Being tactful with different partners.
LEADERSHIP	Exercising diplomatic and sensitive leadership.
MANAGEMENT	Managing meetings and encounters well; working with clear structures and guidelines.
NEGOTIATION	Being able to devise ways of working with different partners that accommodate different styles and approaches.
PERSUASION	Showing how a partnership approach can overcome the difficulties of working alone; convincing all partners that a joint approach is best and that everyone can contribute to making it work.
PLANNING	Developing work plans and initiative schedules; task allocation; meetings etc.
REVIEWING	Constantly examining, monitoring, and revising progress and commitment.

Development and testing: assessing the innovativeness and quality of the outcome

"Making things happen is very important for the engagement of the partners."

During this process the partnership begins to develop its work and consolidates mechanisms and systems in areas such as communication, reporting and evaluating. Ensuring the engagement of all partners, checking that objectives remain common, and monitoring that tasks are being carried out as agreed and progress is being made is vital. It is also important to manage diversity by maintaining open and critical dialogue so that the value and usefulness of the partnership initiative can be considered from different perspectives. The skills listed at the top of the following page are important at this stage.

Key skills for development and testing

BALANCING	Working to achieve fairness and equilibrium – using a carrot-and-stick approach; becoming skilled as good moderators.
COMMUNICATION	Using open and culturally sensitive language; simplifying jargon; explaining EQUAL clearly to all partners and stakeholders.
EVALUATION	Assessing effectiveness and efficiency on a regular basis to ensure that initiative work is meeting objectives.
FLEXIBILITY	Being prepared to change things.
INFORMATION-SHARING	Sharing what happens within organisations involved in the DP; encouraging open discussion from the start of the initiative among all partners; exchanging learning outside the partnership.
LEADERSHIP	Ensuring that all partners are motivated and visibly engaged in the partnership; bringing theory into practice; being a "democratic dictator" – making sure that delivery is real and conforms to EQUAL, not just ticking boxes.
MANAGEMENT	Ensuring that administrative systems run smoothly and that meeting dates are adhered to especially when people are busy or are strategic partners.
MENTORING	Supporting partners who are having organisational difficulties that affect their involvement or delivery in the partnership; or who lack confidence or feel disengaged; help partners develop!
RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING	Building formal and informal relationships all the time!

Mainstreaming: adapting and institutionalising results

"It is essential to obtain genuine links into powerful mainstreaming organisations to enable successful local pilots to proceed to a mainstreaming strategy."

"Internal channels are very important. We have to spread the initiative and its results inside organisations."

Mainstreaming needs to be addressed throughout a partnership's development as it involves the embedding of the results of partnership initiative work and ensuring that they can be replicated and scaled-up in order to have wider economic, political, cultural and organisational impact. A systematic approach is needed to ensure that results are sustainable. This involves developing and building upon contacts within, between and across other initiatives, programmes, networks and institutions at local, national, regional and international levels, which may be represented in the partnership's advisory and implementing bodies. The internalisation of the partnership into the organisations to which it is attached can be an effective way of mainstreaming. Strategies for mainstreaming crucially require the intervention and support of national EQUAL authorities. At this stage, in terms of skills of those involved, the focus should be on the following.

Key skills for mainstreaming

COMMUNICATION	Telling the story of your partnership; being able to communicate the benefits of a partnership approach to wider audiences as well as within, between and across institutions.
CREATIVE THINKING	Thinking innovatively about opportunities for long-lasting change within, between and across organisations.
LEADERSHIP	Taking a key role in scaling-up and transferring good practice.
MANAGEMENT	Managing opportunities for spreading the partnership message and capitalising on connections and opportunities for this.
NETWORKING	Developing and maintaining learning networks where good practice can be shared; involving key mainstreaming targets and multipliers.
PERSUASION	Persuading others of the advantages of a partnership approach with the commitment and energy to press this forward.

Further action: establishing a strategy for continuous and sustainable change

"The deadliest thing for a partnership is to perpetuate it for its own sake."

This is a "moving-on" process in which decisions are made about what should happen after a partnership has completed its work. This might involve agreement on an appropriate conclusion to a partnership or developing further work. This includes asking questions about whether the partnership must necessarily persist in its own right; what strategies need to be in place to ensure some form of continuity and who should take responsibility for developing these. It is also vital to ensure that outcomes for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market are sustainable. Again, skills differ according to the stage of partnership development.

Key skills for further action

COMMUNICATION	Sharing and celebrating successes and achievements both internally and externally.
EVALUATION	Assessing what the partnership has achieved and what moving-on options are most appropriate for it.
FACILITATION	Facilitating dialogue and discussion about further action and strategies for this; enabling the partnership to disband or move on smoothly and effectively.
LEADERSHIP	Encouraging partners to think about moving-on from the start.
MANAGEMENT	Managing change and involving others in this process so that it is transparent.
PLANNING	Planning strategies for further action at an early stage; finding the right people to take them forward.

Cross-cutting themes

A range of cross-cutting themes affect partnership-building. These are outlined in more detail in the briefs with regard to specific processes and include:

Context: An awareness that all partnerships are conditioned by the particular environments in which they work and operate best where there is a positive local enabling environment. Contextual factors have a constant bearing upon partnerships, and accommodating and adapting to these is key to a partnership's sustainability.

Empowerment: Involving people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, or organisations that represent them, as partners or stakeholders in the development of the partnership's work.

Trust: Developing mutual respect through a clear understanding of each partner and their reasons for participating in the partnership and encouraging transparency in all activities relating to the partnership.

Language: Arriving at a common understanding of terms across different language layers, including national language; different sector/organisational terminology; EQUAL terminology; culturally sensitive language and partnership terminology.

Leadership: Involving people with diverse leadership competencies so that the different partners can jointly tackle challenges. Ensuring that leadership roles are trans-parent and clearly defined, and there is an acceptance that these may change over time.

Innovation: Demonstrating innovation by creative ways of addressing EQUAL themes with fresh approaches or building upon and improving pre-existing methods and tools.

Skills: Using both "hard" and "soft" skills, and assessing skills capacity by identifying strengths and weaknesses and where training may be needed.

Flexibility: Being flexible enough to accommodate and adapt to internal and external change, and using creative methodologies and tools for this.

Support from Managing Authorities and National Support Structures: Developing strong relationships with national EQUAL authorities throughout the development of the work.

Overcoming obstacles: Problem-solving through open discussion and the adoption of a flexible approach with a willingness to change in order to regenerate the partnership after conflict.

Time: Appreciating the time needed to build and develop a partnership, as well as being aware of different partner timeframes and what conditions them.

Reviewing: Using clear review, monitoring and evaluation strategies to inform the smooth development of the partnership.

3. Preparatory work: assessing the point of departure

Knowledge of EQUAL

Information about EQUAL and a clear understanding of its aims and how it works (including strategy and operations) is vital for preparatory work - particularly for funding rules and regulations - as is experience of working within similar initiatives on the EQUAL themes and/or with the EC.

The EQUAL website gives full details of the programme, as well as a range of practical information and guides from national websites on:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/equal

Support from Managing Authorities and National Support Structures

Being able to access and draw upon information and advice from these organisations is important in encouraging and promoting partnerships throughout their development. As well as co-ordinating EQUAL information nationally by means of handbooks and websites, additional useful support is provided by regular meetings or telephone contact; tips about other DP or EC initiatives from which learning might be gained; the organisation of national workshops where informal contacts and networks within EQUAL can be developed and information about national/international events or contacts that might be of interest in relation to a particular issue or theme.

TIP: Confide in and build relationships with Managing Authorities and National Support Structures!

Researching and reviewing the context

EQUAL Development Partnerships are developing within an international context in which there is growing recognition that partnerships between different sectors and regions offer the possibility of meeting pressing social challenges. However, it is important to acknowledge that all partnerships are conditioned by the specific economic, political, cultural and social environments in which they work. Partnerships appear to be most successful where there is a local enabling environment that encourages their development. This may include positive government policies, supportive legal and regulatory frameworks and the

existence of intermediary organisations and/or key individuals capable of bringing different institutions together. Where such environmental factors are limited, or do not exist, partnerships are faced with difficulties that condition their success both nationally and transnationally.

Preparing the ground for the establishment of a partnership involves researching and reviewing the context in which it intends to work, and identifying key issues that might be tackled under EQUAL. This necessitates:

*   careful examination of the needs of people who are disadvantaged in the labour market and the ensuing rationale for the partnership through a number of questions:

    -   What evidence indicates that the proposed work should be undertaken?

    -   What has been done to date and by whom?

    -   What is the impact of the past activity?

    -   What can be learnt from past attempts?

    -   What are we trying to accomplish?

*   identifying wider resources – both financial and non-financial;

*   assessing prior experience through links with appropriate organisations and networks that have a long working history in an area and the identification of partnerships that already exist around similar themes - in many cases DPs are able to adapt to the work of an existing partnership, organisation or initiative.

An enabling environment for Development Partnerships

The setting up and operation of EQUAL Development Partnerships in Greece: Law 2956/2001 (Article 42)

With a view to facilitating the implementation of EQUAL through "strategic", "effective" and "durable" partnerships bringing together all relevant actors, Law 2956/2001 (Article 42) was issued. This law regulates and exemplifies matters such as:

- the legal status of DPs (not-for-profit private legal entities);
- decision-making procedures;
- DP administration bodies and their responsibilities and mandate;
- participation of public organisations, as well as central and regional administration agencies; and
- the issuing of joint decisions by the Ministers of Economic Planning and Labour and Social Affairs regulating all matters concerning performance, application, management, finance, evaluation and control of Equal DPs.

The setting up and operation of the EQUAL DPs according to the provisions of the law have so far resulted in:

- the multi-sector nature of Greek DPs. Members include vocational training centres, trade unions, chambers of commerce and industry, non-profit organisations, associations, private entreprises, regional & local authorities (e.g. municipalities etc), public sector services and entities and non-governmental organisations;
- partners of different legal status and size participate in DPs on a fairly equal basis;
- all DP Partners participate in administration and decision-making procedures;
- in spite of initial problems DPs present the characteristic of cohesion. Very few instances of partner departure have been reported and, where this has happened, they have been replaced with new partners recommended by the DP's Board of Directors;
- the DP's articles of association clearly distinguish the roles of the partners in the DP, as well as the manner of issuing decisions;
- the Board of Directors may realise sessions by a simple majority and not by holding a plenary session, which gives DP's flexibility in issuing decisions;
- the possibility of setting up committees and of participating in the legislated mechanisms for certification of work and for accounting control of payments gives the DP's partners the opportunity to follow the evolution of the DP's implementation; and
- the nomination of the Administrator and the Co-ordinating Partner on the basis of his/her proven knowledge and experience in the relevant implementation and administration ensures even communication and the fast flow of information between the partners and the Managing Authority. It also supports "weaker" and more "inexperienced" partners in the implementation and administration of the DP.

TIP: Closely examine the opportunities and challenges for partnership-building in your particular context!

Problem definition / Assessing the forces for and against a partnership approach in George, L. & Madden, K. (2000), *The Partnership Brokers Handbook*, UNSC & IBLF, London http://www.partnershipbrokers.net

Building on pre-existing work or partnerships

Many EQUAL Partnerships adapt to pre-existing partnerships or build upon connections and networks with organisations that they know well and have worked with previously.

Advantages:

- There is a shared understanding of many of the issues involved.

- Objectives can more easily be reached because partners know one another, are aware of how they work and one another's reliability.

- Strong local connections and practices can more easily be built upon at regional level.

- Trust is more easily built when pre-established relationships exist.

Disadvantages:

- There is no input of fresh ideas, new modes of organisation or working methodologies.

- Developing connections with those who are accustomed to working in a set way can be time-consuming.

- It can be costly as it may involve using internal resources to establish connections.

- A genuinely common initiative may be difficult to arrive at as partners who were not "original" members may feel marginalised.

Starting a new partnership

Advantages:

- Fresh and more innovative approaches to issues, initiatives and methodologies.

- A diversity of ideas with the possibility of developing many different initiatives involving disadvantaged groups.

- New contacts and knowledge are built.

- Individuals and partners get to know each other well through the process of starting from scratch.

Disadvantages:

- More difficult to arrive at a common approach.

- Trust-building takes longer.

- Very demanding in terms of both work and length of time needed to get things started.

TIP: Take time to think through issues imaginatively when starting a new partnership!

Building on prior knowledge & experience of working in partnership

Austria: RepaNet

ARGE Muellvermeidung (Association for Waste Prevention) is the co-ordinating partner of the DP RepaNet. It is an NGO and well-known networking organisation which was founded in 1982 to create new employment opportunities in the environmental sector. Between 1995-2000 ARGE was project co-ordinator for two ADAPT projects and an EMPLOYMENT project (forerunners of EQUAL). EQUAL set the challenge of creating an unprecedented waste management network and opening up higher profile fields of business to those segregated from the employment market in Austria. ARGE selected the topic – repair services a new trend in the environmental sector in Austria – and chose all potential partners. A large number of NGOs were selected for their regional good practice. National-level organisations were chosen for their mainstreaming potential and included the Federal Ministry for Environment, the Chamber of Commerce and the Union of Salaried Private Sector Employees (both had existing departments for environmental affairs with proactive officials), and the National Association for Waste Management (of which all Austrian municipalities are members).

Belgium: Décrire

Décrire was established from an existing partnership between three organisations: FOREM (the public employment organisation for employment and training in the Walloon Region) which has worked with unemployed people within the framework of collective redundancies in the Walloon region for 25 years, always in partnership with trade union organisations and sometimes trade and industry organisations. CAREMPLOI – a trade union partnership that had worked previously with FOREM on programmes for the social and professional reinsertion of people made redundant after an industrial closure. CEFRET (Centre de Formation Textile – Training Centre for the Textile Industry) – a partnership between a trade union from the textile industry and the Textile Trade and Industry Organisation which aims to retain former workers within the textile sector by offering them the opportunity to retrain, adapt to new techniques and be relocated. The Université Libre de Bruxelles joined as a new partner. It undertakes academic research on redeployment.

Great Britain: JIVE (Joint Interventions) Partners

The drive for the DP came from an existing partnership of two organisations (Let's TWIST) that was set up following a successful Employment Initiative project. One of these partners became the lead partner in JIVE Partners. The DP grew from a basic desire to roll out the work that had been carried out on a regional basis by Let's TWIST into the national arena and a need to have "test bed" organisations. The broad framework for action was already in existence before the establishment of the partnership. Some modifications were made in discussion with one of the partners from an NGO with whom JIVE Partners had strong ideological links. These three organisations became the Core Management group, the NGO acting as an umbrella for the other NGOs interested in joining the partnership.

4. Preparatory work: looking for partners

Identifying and selecting partners

EQUAL Partnerships do not start in a vacuum. Usually an initiating organisation takes the lead in developing the idea for a partnership, and starts the process of looking for potential partners and resources. Identifying and agreeing on the "right" players to bring into the partnership is key to preparatory work. An assessment of the risks and rewards of being involved in a partnership is important for each potential partner to undertake. This also involves analysing different strengths and weaknesses and is especially important if the partnership is not building on a pre-existing partnership or contacts with known organisations.

Careful partner selection is important:

- to make the partnership approach relevant,

- to enable effective working relationships,

- to minimise risks,

- to ensure that partnership activities are sustainable, and

- to capitalise on potential mainstreaming possibilities (e.g. policy audiences in national or regional government).

TIP: Check that potential partners show excitement and interest in joining the partnership so that there is enthusiasm and commitment to make it work!

Checking on resources

All partners will have a selection of different human and financial resources that they can bring to the partnership. These may include information; physical space; products; expertise; skills, relationships; people and money. The partnership needs to decide which of these are required for its work and which potential partner can best bring these to the table. This may involve a resource mapping exercise in which partners detail the resources that they are best equipped to offer the partnership, and an assessment is made of what is available for its work.

TIP: Balance the power of finance by experience, skills and knowledge!

European Commission EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP facilitators
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Assessing whether organisations are ready to partner and **Stakeholder Analysis** in George, L. & Madden, K. (2000) *The Partnership Brokers Handbook*, UNSC & IBLF, London http://www.partnershipbrokers.net

Stakeholder Analysis in European Commission PCM Guidelines http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/euro-peaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

Evaluation of socio-economic development: Stakeholder consultation
http://www.evalsed.info/frame_techniques_part1_2.asp

Starting a partnership

Sweden: Diversity in Västernorrland

In July 2000, an informal six-member working group was established from a first meeting of 20 organisations. It included an Association of Local Authorities, two County Boards, two NGOs and a Regional Social Insurance Office. A project leader was employed to establish the partnership process by drawing up an inventory of ideas from all the county's municipalities where EQUAL was introduced. The first inventory involved about 200 people. In May 2001, a one-day meeting was held with 50 participants who were invited to brainstorm EQUAL ideas. The start was based on ideas and there were no discussions at this stage about a possible partnership. About 30 ideas were outlined in detail from which 12 were selected as real EQUAL projects. In the end seven of these were financed and realised. During this time the 14 partners for the DP were gradually engaged. Some of them emerged naturally as they were responsible for the issues and target groups that the ideas/projects dealt with while others were engaged as financial partners without direct project involvement. Parallel with this work many local and regional authorities, municipalities and organisations were involved in a process to get a vision for the whole county. This centred on diversity and thus supported our EQUAL process.

Agreeing on numbers

EQUAL DPs vary enormously in size with as few as three or four partners to more than 50. Many DPs choose to limit the number of partners involved in their work in order to ensure easy management and smoother relationships. They also feel that it is easier to get to know and work with one another and trust is more easily established. Larger partnerships, however, feel strongly that by bringing together a wide range of organisations that do not usually work together they are able to secure a greater variety of distinct and complementary resources, be more innovative by drawing on more ideas and obtain good mainstreaming potential as their work develops.

Agreeing on numbers

Belgium: Décrire (4 partners)

Décrire put a limit to the number of members in its DP at this stage because objectives and actions were clearly pinpointed, and each partner agreed to be in charge of action in the field of their competencies.

Ireland: Equal at Work -The Dublin Employment Pact (48 Partners)

No limit on numbers was planned. On the contrary, the intent was to achieve an impact across the three sectors of the Dublin labour market (inherent mainstreaming effect), so partners from different sectors and different geographical areas of the region were actively canvassed from the start. The core of the partnership was formed by existing partners. Workshops developing the theme for the EQUAL application then identified further partners to involve. These were then approached and asked to join the initiative on the basis of the outline proposal underlying the application. Of the 48 partners involved in the DP, the initial core consisted of 10. Approximately 34 partners were involved in completing the application and fleshing out the details of each site work plan. The final partners were then brought on board "locally" by the established sites.

Key questions to ask when identifying potential partners

Reputation: Can and will they deliver? Have they had previous experience of EC programme work?

Legitimacy: Are the organisations empowered by their members/stakeholders/management boards to make decisions on issues regarding the work of the partnership? Do the individuals that represent them have the authority to act on their behalf?

Skills and resources: What can they offer? Do they have solid skills and resources (cash/non-cash?)

Complementarity: Do their skills and resources provide the partnership with something to fill a gap and assist its work – something that others cannot provide?

Mainstreaming: Are policy makers and people who are disadvantaged in the labour market well-represented/linked into the partnership so that its impact will be long lasting? Have change-makers and people who can "move" agendas been identified?

Motivation: Do they view partnership as a way forward? Are they motivated to work in partnership?

Understanding incentives

Understanding the motivation and organisational expectations of the partnership and its work for different partners is vital to the success of EQUAL Partnerships. This means working to make sure that core partner incentives for participating in the partnership are transparent and clear. An awareness by all partners that complementary objectives can be reached through working together even though organisational aims and approaches may be different is central to this. Ultimately all partners need to recognise the need for the partnership and the fact that it will provide them with some end result that could not be achieved by one organisation on its own.

TIP: Clearly define who brings what to the partnership and why they wish to work collaboratively!

Engaging partners

An acknowledgment of the different skills bases, competencies and resources that each partner brings to the partnership is important in engaging partners. A balanced set of contributions from the different partners where each resource is valued for its complementarity and potential partners feel accepted on an equitable basis is important. This involves arriving at what the Equal at Work - Dublin Employment Pact DP describes as a "win-win formula" in which "the sum of mutual gain is greater than immediate individual gain". It is particularly important for NGOs and/or small organisations to feel that they are accepted on an equitable basis as they may feel constrained in their ability to become credible partners because of financial and skills limitations. At times assisting the ability of such organisations to obtain and develop resources may be necessary to support their inclusion in the partnership. This needs to be addressed carefully as it is not an easy process and can sidetrack from the main partnership agenda.

The easiest partners to engage are usually those who:

- are closest to the problems being tackled by EQUAL,
- lack the resources to undertake initiatives they know are required,
- the initiating organisation has common ground with,
- function well internally, and
- have financial capacity.

Partners that are more difficult to involve include those who:

- need convincing of the value of the partnership,
- have strong political/bureaucratic cultures e.g. state agencies,
- are threatened by the partnership's objectives,
- lack confidence and/or partnership experience,
- have funding difficulties,
- have difficulties related to small size (lack of dedicated staff working on the partnership),
- have difficulties relating to large size (lack of integration with parent organisation),
- are inflexible and have set objectives, and
- find funding rules and regulations are difficult to work with.

Methods of encouraging engagement

Engaging partners, especially reluctant ones, involves careful work. Possible methods for this include:

- encourage discussion and open dialogue about the partnership and its aims whenever possible,
- reinforce contacts and identify key people in partner organisations who can encourage involvement,
- hold initial workshops on the scope and theme of what is being proposed,
- hold regular meetings to explain the aims of the partnership,
- carry out visits to partner organisations to present the project,
- use a facilitator to moderate the discussion process and move people along to common ground,
- dedicate a staff member from the initiating organisation to work with a particular partner,
- learn about and get to know potential partner organisations well,
- establish good informal relationships with partner representatives,
- engage good mainstreaming partners at the start e.g. government & national bodies, and
- have a single clear issue focus that partners can identify with easily.

> **TIP: *Explain the initiative and its aims over and over again in order to get understanding and buy-in - "It is a never ending job."***

Engaging the private sector as an EQUAL partner

The sector that appears to participate least in EQUAL Partnerships is the private sector. Private sector engagement in EQUAL Partnerships is important because of the role its plays in local job creation and its potential for developing labour force skills that employers need within the community. Through involvement in partnerships the private sector can also maximise positive economic, social and environmental impacts.

> **TIP: *Show that cross-sector partnerships make good business sense by benefiting both shareholders and stakeholders!***

Methods for promoting private sector engagement

- Highlight legal obligations e.g. concerning equal opportunities,
- use examples of companies that have benefited from collaboration in partnerships,
- seek senior management buy-in for the partnership,
- demonstrate how business can gain positive publicity and mainstreaming links with wider society, and
- draw on arguments from global corporate citizenship movement that show benefits of business engagement in societal issues.

Empowerment

A central aim of EQUAL Partnerships is to combat discrimination and inequality in the labour market, and enable people who are disadvantaged in the labour market to work with other stakeholders on an "equal footing". It is therefore essential that people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, or organisations that represent them, be involved as partners or stakeholders in the development of their work. Empowerment can also apply to partners themselves, whether they are organisations representing people who are disadvantaged in the labour market or other types of stakeholder organisations. Partnerships that develop creative relationships with stakeholder groups through dialogue and consultation are likely to be the most successful in supporting the empowerment process. At the same time an open and transparent structure and communication style that encourages people who are disadvantaged in the labour market to engage with the partnership is important. On-going monitoring appears to be a useful tool for ensuring empowerment.

Partnership brokering

Partnerships often rely upon someone to act as an intermediary or facilitator during their work, especially in the early stages. This "partnership broker" develops relationships between parties and carries out the "behind the scenes" work to create and build the partnership. They may be a member of the initiating organisation's staff or an external consultant/facilitator. A good partnership broker needs to be trusted by all the partners and requires a range of qualities and skills including a clear understanding of the DP and the context in which it operates; a commitment to the DP; experience of working with different sectors; good communication and language skills – especially an ability to listen; personal engagement; imagination and honesty.

Overcoming early obstacles

Ireland: Sonas DP Ireland Ltd.

Sonas' early difficulties arose when the partnership model was applied – everyone was equal and had an equal say. This made it difficult as without clear leadership there was an undercurrent of 'positioning' and seeking to ensure individual outcomes in the preparatory and planning stages. This was solved by using an external facilitator to help find a common and agreeable set of goals and procedures. Change also came with the involvement of three representatives at a first transnational meeting which seemed a great deal more advanced than the Sonas DP. The groups spent a lot of time together which gave them an insight into the commitment and dedication of each other and was useful in building respect and resolve to get things moving later. This was the catalyst that binded the entire DP into a more decisive and action-led group. By seizing the initiative, this group led the others both by example and a sense of urgency to arrive together at agreed goals and timeframes. After that, the meetings of the DP became more focused and cohesive, and the roles of all of the members took on a new sense of ownership.

Great Britain: JIVE (Joint Interventions) Partners

The NGOs JIVE chose to work with were all very under-resourced organisations and the development of the DP was overshadowed by a worry that they would not find much funding. Valuable time was spent unsuccessfully trying to assist them with this. To support the NGOs the lead partner gave intensive support around the financial problems encountered. A varied intervention rate gave them time to build up a different profile in their region to attract funding. As a result two of the organisations managed but it is still a problem for one. The financial insecurity of all the NGOs has been a constant thread throughout the project and hindered some of its potential and activities.

TIP: Choose a partnership broker with personal integrity and a willingness to listen!

Partnership Brokers Website:
http://www.partnershipbrokers.net
European Commission EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP Facilitators:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Dealing with initial difficulties

During the preparatory process a number of obstacles may be encountered. These might relate to the external constraints of the environment in which the partnership seeks to work; pre-conceived attitudes towards different potential partners; lack of partnership-building skills and different organisational priorities that impede adequate support for the proposed partnership. Most of these challenges can be overcome through hard work and commitment, and addressing them directly can serve as a catalyst for developing new and dynamic ways of working together.

Transnational partnerships

As transnational co-operation is an integral part of the future work programme of any DP, it is recommended to start identifying transnational partners as soon as possible and then develop detailed proposals in tandem. More information on transnationality should be accessed through the "Guide on Transnational Co-operation (2004-2008)".

EQUAL Guide on Transnational Co-operation (2004-2008):
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

5. Initiation: planning for partnership

Agreeing on "rules of engagement"

Define core principles for practical ways of working together and make sure that these are communicated clearly among all partners. Developing "rules of engagement" together helps to build respect and trust among partners.

Developing partnership ground rules in George, L. & Madden, K. (2000) *The Partnership Brokers Handbook*, UNSC & IBLF, London http://www.partnershipbrokers.net

Agreeing on a common vision

Reaching consensus about what the partnership stands for and its central purpose is important in giving a sense of commitment to the partnership. Therefore, objectives and methods need to be clarified by defining exactly what the partners wish to pursue and how they will go about this.

Agreeing on a common vision

Ireland: Equal at Work - The Dublin Employment Pact

Following the decision to establish the partnership to pursue the goals identified under EQUAL, a series of workshops were held to establish the goals and mission of the partnership. These workshops were facilitated by a key member of staff involved since the start of the process and enjoying the trust of the partners individually. The first key principle established was that all decisions would be by consensus and that this would apply in all cases. The mission of the DP was established through refining and defining the core objectives the partners wished to pursue. In this process, the facilitator was instructed to ensure that the outcome could be evaluated "from any angle" as a win-win formula, i.e. that every partner had something to gain individually, and that the sum of the gain would be greater than their immediate individual gain. On this the formula reached from approximately twelve objectives was the overarching aim which described them all clearly and practically – "Creating an Accessible Labour Market through Open Human Resource Practices".

TIP: Make sure that it is the group and not an individual who drives your vision forward and ensure the vision is realistic!

European Commission EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP Facilitators
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Problem Analysis, Analysis of Objectives & Analysis of Strategies in European Commission PCM Guidelines
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

Visioning partnerships in George, L. & Madden, K. (2000) *The Partnership Brokers Handbook*, UNSC & IBLF, London http://www.partnershipbrokers.net

Making sure everyone is on board

At this stage, it may become apparent that not all the necessary partners are involved to achieve the vision. Revisiting the stakeholder analysis is a good idea.

European Commission EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP Facilitators
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Stakeholder Analysis in George, L. & Madden, K. (2000) *The Partnership Brokers Handbook*, UNSC & IBLF, London http://www.partnershipbrokers.net

Stakeholder Analysis in European Commission PCM Guidelines
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

Evaluation of socio-economic development: Stakeholder consultation
http://www.evalsed.info/frame_techniques_part1_2.asp

Allocating roles and responsibilities

Before a proper structure can be agreed upon it is important to make decisions about what key roles are necessary and who should carry these out. This is usually based on an analysis of capacities, skills, qualities, resources and motivation. It is vital to ensure that roles are clearly defined and understood across the partnership.

Deciding who does what

France: De la précarité à l'emploi durable

The DP is made up of three training centres concerned with vocational training, professional integration and illiteracy (AGORA, IBEP and AFA Le Goëlo), as well a network of companies for interim employment (ADIA) and a network of hostels for young workers (URFJT). "**Who does what?**" was a central question right from the start. It was agreed that a structure that built upon the strengths of each partner would be established.

AGORA (the pilot organisation for the EQUAL initiative): nominates lead initiatives and co-ordinates experimentation, creates links between each member of the partnership (national & transnational) and supports the different initiative groups.

Orientation Committee: includes initiative funder representatives and the managers of the training organisations. Meets annually. Piloting Committee: includes nine members - official representatives of each partner. Meets at least four times a year and makes decisions on the initiative's development.

Project Group: members come from resource people for the initiative. Links the Pilot Committee and the Teacher Training Group.

Teaching Training Group: made up of seven different trainers from AGORA, IBEP, AFA Le Goëlo and a member of ADIA's Human Resource Department.

TIP: Define clearly and carefully who will take which role and why!

Staffing

It is important to make sure that the partnership is adequately and suitably staffed. In order to ensure the sustainability of the initiative and continuity of staff, early recruitment and involvement of the right people is important. Careful attention should be paid to team numbers, composition and personal profiles. Choosing staff who have an awareness of EQUAL and thematic or initiative issues is important as are clear and concise job descriptions.

TIP: Make sure that the partnership is staffed with team players!

EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP Facilitators
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Activity Schedules in European Commission PCM Guidelines
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

Building in monitoring systems

It is important to establish monitoring procedures during the initiation phase of the partnership. Systems for tracking both partner commitment and approaches that ensure people who are disadvantaged in the labour market are targeted as the partnership develops its work should be incorporated into the measurement process. See also brief 7 on reporting.

TIP: Develop monitoring structures that are easy to use!

Monitoring in European Commission PCM Guidelines
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

Setting up an evaluation system

As evaluation is so closely linked to mainstreaming, it is important that systems for regular assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of partnership initiatives are installed that respond to the needs of partners, people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, and EQUAL Managing Authorities and NSSs.

On-going evaluation is crucial for examining what works and what does not, and enabling the re-designing of approaches if necessary (see also brief 7 for use of learning evaluation during development and testing). External evaluators can be used for this though it is imperative that whoever is selected clearly understands the partnership initiative and its aims. Internal evaluation systems in which evaluators are part of the partnership process may also be used. In both cases the main actors within a partnership need to have a clear capacity to deliver the evaluation. Carefully drafted Terms of Reference and a balanced selection committee help to make the selection process for external evaluators transparent but also make it clear what is expected of possible internal evaluators. A Steering Committee, whose participants should cover a wide range of interests, should be constituted to ensure adequate fol-

low-up of the evaluator's work. One of the key tasks of this Steering Committee is to assess the quality of the evaluation work both from the perspective of the outputs and the process (see also annex for further guidance on evaluation).

European Commission EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP Facilitators
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Evaluation of socio-economic development
Part 2: Designing and implementing evaluation
http://www.evalsed.info/frame_guide_part2.asp

Evaluation in European Commission PCM Guidelines
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

TIP: Invest time and effort in setting measurable targets with clear link to participant and societal benefits!

Using a general planning framework

An overarching planning framework that incorporates the key issues identified above is very useful when initiating a partnership.

All integrated planning frameworks address similar issues as can be seen from the GROW and LOGFRAME approaches. Some Member States provide a customised guide, based on the European Commission's EQUAL Partnership Oriented Planning Guide for DP Facilitators. The latter guide is destined for facilitators and can be found on the Commission's EQUAL website.

General planning frameworks

The logical framework approach

Italy: SONAR DP in the Piemonte region has used the logical framework approach as a planning and management tool. This approach consists of an integrated toolbox containing:

an **analysis** phase with:

- stakeholder analysis
- problem analysis
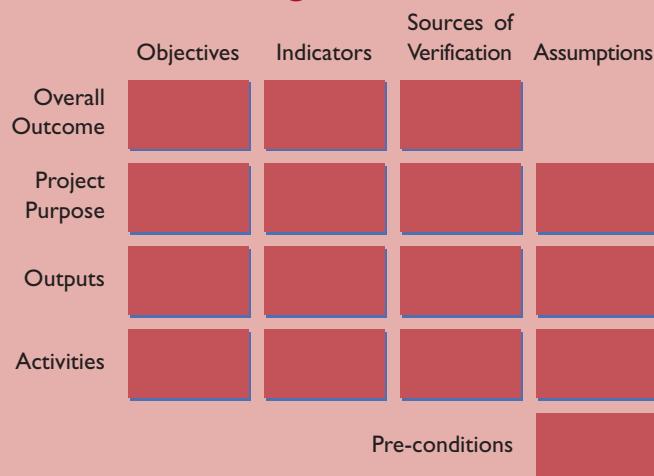- objectives analysis
- strategy analysis

a **planning** phase with:

- constitution of the partnership intervention logic,
- identifying risks/assumptions/pre-conditions,
- drawing up indicators and sources of verification for results at different levels, and
- drawing up workplans and resource schedules.

All of the above steps are concisely represented in a matrix (see below).

Evaluation is then conducted by assessing the different results within the intervention logic on the basis of the indicators.

Logical Framework

	Objectives	Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
Overall Outcome	▨	▨	▨	
Project Purpose	▨	▨	▨	▨
Outputs	▨	▨	▨	▨
Activities	▨	▨	▨	▨
Pre-conditions				▨

The GROW approach

Sweden: Diversity in Västernorrland - The Diversity in Västernorrland DP has based its development on a GROW structure that agrees on: **G** – Goals **R** – Realities **O** – Options (opportunities, ideas, possible activities) **W** – Who? What? When?

GOALS: Discussion of overall goals, sub-goals as well as the results and effects sought in the long- and short-term.

REALITY: Examination of the opportunities to conduct change. Aspects that support EQUAL ideas and those that represent obstacles - in certain cases the same factor can both support and hinder.

OPTIONS: Open discussion of conceivable means to achieve the goals listed. In the case of the Västernorrland DP this involved agreement to: Survey obstacles and describe them; develop, gather and spread knowledge, and deliver good examples and role models; use, help and support each other and heighten self-esteem; increase involvement in own and others' initiatives within and beyond DP, and encourage and arrange meetings within and beyond DP; work for continuity during initiative period and after initiative conclusion; seek resources.

WHO? WHAT? WHEN?: Allocate roles and responsibilities; agree on activities and the time schedules for these.

6. Initiation: formalising and building true partnership

Partnership form

DPs may choose between a formal (legally registered entity) and a more informal structure (loose network) for partnerships. A legal form provides a focus for activities and a good position from which to mobilise and manage resources. It can, however, also incur administrative costs and may be regarded as too bureaucratic for some DPs. A looser form offers greater room for ideas and is less rigid but may be taken less seriously by external audiences. Partners may also neglect it when their own organisational work priorities are particularly heavy.

Creating a legal form

Ireland: Sonas DP Ireland Ltd.

This DP faced the problem of structure and grappled with it for some time. Three options became apparent: (1) A 'loose' informal agreement (2) A formal legal partnership arrangement (3) A company arrangement limited by guarantee. Sonas considered these options and after much discussion was clear that it needed to create an 'entity' that: was distinct from the partner organisations; had formal status in order to transact financially and assume responsibility; was capable of sharing legal responsibility equally between partner organisations but also to comprise only the DP members; indemnified the DP members for actions taken in the name of their parent organisation. These parameters pointed to the fact that Sonas should set up a **company limited by guarantee** (non-profit organisation with corporate status). Having agreed to this Sonas then had to 'sell' the idea to the parent organisations. Some of them had a problem because internal rules meant that the manager was the only person empowered to act as a director of another company and to appoint a less senior person to such a position was against their practice. However, the DP was adamant that it did not want even nominal power to be vested in a person who was not the regular DP member at its meetings. Sonas foresaw problems if, for instance, it had to get signatures from people who were not intimately involved in the running of the DP. Eventually, all the organisations agreed to the proposed structure which has proven to be highly successful.

Partnership management structures

Steering groups, management committees, advisory bodies, task forces, monitoring committees, etc. are used to let members of the partnerships participate at different levels of operations and with different levels of authority.

Partnerships also face choices between a centralised management system, usually by one of the partner organisations acting on behalf of the partnership, or a more flexible and decentralised system in which different partners carry out different management tasks. Centralised management offers an efficient way of working but may be regarded as too conventional for partnerships as it does not reflect their collaborative and cross-sector nature. The choice of management for a DP depends crucially on the context in which the DP is working and the nature of the partners involved.

Creating structure

Ireland: Equal at Work – The Dublin Employment Pact

The challenge for a large partnership with 48 partners was to create structures which ensured both maximum practical involvement by partners on the one hand and a smooth functioning project management system on the other. A Management Committee of 12 members representative of all sectors involved in the Development Partnership (local authorities, social partners, NGOs etc.) was appointed. This Development Partnership Management Committee manages the Project Manager and the overall initiative. In addition, each of the four "sites" of the initiative established a management committee comprising all actors active in that particular site. In this way, a relatively smooth multi-level management system was created where all partners were actively engaged at the point of their greatest interest. The process was necessarily slow, but involvement of a wide range of partners in planning and design of the initiative ensured buy-in and commitment.

Creating structure (cont.)

Austria: RepaNet

RepaNet decided not to establish a legal organisation to run the EQUAL partnership. Instead it concentrated on ensuring a clear structure for co-operation that included:

- a Steering Group: one member of the social partners organisations each, the Ministry of Environment, one member of the participating five employment initiatives (responsible for most of the operational work), a gender-mainstreaming representative, the organisation responsible for finances and the co-ordinating organisation,
- a "Mainstreaming" Working Group composed of the steering group and the Austrian Waste Management Association (all Austrian municipalities are members),
- a "Repair" Working Group where standards are established, and
- an "Employment and Environment" network consisting of five employment initiatives and open to other employment initiative representatives who want to share experiences within the group.

TIP: Form clear structures right from the beginning!

Establishing decision-making procedures

Establishing decision-making procedures that are equitable and inclusive is central to the partnership initiation process. These are usually agreed upon by all partners on the basis of collective responsibility. They need to be transparent and clearly understood across the partnership with methods of ensuring that decisions arrived at are genuine so that false consensus which might prevent proper analysis of challenges facing the partnership is avoided. Although only important decisions require the involvement of all partners, day-to-day decisions that are agreed upon by delegated individuals must be easily accessible to all members of the partnership. Partnerships also need to think carefully about how people who are disadvantaged in the labour market will be involved in decision-making - whether through representative bodies or other means.

TIP: Make sure that there are clear protocols and procedures for decision-making!

Ensuring democratic decision-making

Austria: RepaNet

Central decisions within the partnership are made by all partners. The definition of what is a central decision was made during the first meeting of the whole group. It was agreed that all decisions should be agreed by consensus as a principle within the network. If this cannot be achieved, the following rules are valid:

- a qualified majority of 2/3 must agree (10 of 14 partners),
- the organisation responsible for finances, the gender mainstreaming representative, the Steering Group and the simple majority of the five participating employment initiatives have the power of veto against decisions made by a majority,
- to simplify decision-making and reduce meetings partners can vote via RepaNet's Internet platform,
- there are no rules for excluding a partner but there are rules on how to handle conflict (mediation strategies), and
- decision on changes of terms and conditions must be unanimous.

Finances

A range of options exist for dealing with funds and accounting procedures. These include:

- quarterly expenses justification provided to EQUAL Managing Authorities,
- a DP co-ordinator responsible for compiling final budget recommendation and making adjustments if necessary,
- involving a Managing Authority or NSS contact person in issues related to the budget and co-financing,
- requesting regular verbal and written information on budget status,
- training in accounting, and
- quarterly requests with review of the basis for this by an accounting assistant prior to payment.

TIP: Have clear and accountable arrangements for finances!

Establishing a solid internal communication and reporting network

Clarity and clear communication within the partnership is vital during the initiation process so that all partners are informed about key issues. This involves regular, accessible and succinct information sharing between partners. See also brief 7 for detailed ways of communicating and reporting used during development and testing, most of which have to be prepared during initiation.

Partnership Agreements

Securing partner commitment is an important part of the initiation process. Often an agreement is the starting point for all joint future work. The Development Partnership Agreement documents the consensus of the partners and presents their common strategy in a structured, concise and coherent way. This agreement may take the form of a formal contract or a less formal Memorandum of Understanding or agreement to co-operate (depending also on the Member State's regulations – nevertheless, all DPAs should contain common elements as described in the annex to this guide). If not a formal contract at the beginning, it may become formalised as the partnership develops and the initiatives that it works with demand a need for legal service-level contracts.

TIP: Use your Partnership Agreement as a reference point for evaluation of partner progress and contribution!

Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCA)

The TCA is an integral part of the DPA. The "Guide on Transnational Co-operation (2004-2008)" contains more information on this vital aspect.

TIP: Consult the "Guide on Transnational Co-operation (2004-2008)" for details on how to integrate the TCA into the DPA!

EQUAL Guide on Transnational Co-operation (2004-2008):
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

Trust

Trust is built upon mutual respect. For many partnerships it is the most essential aspect of the process of partnership-building and it is vital to encourage activities that assist the development of respect among partners through working together. Because trust is something that grows over time rather than something that can be acquired at the start of a partnership, it is important that there is a clear understanding of each partner and their reasons for participating in the partnership; transparency from each partner in all activities relating to the partnership and the demonstration of genuine commitment to it. It is also important to bear in mind that although it may be possible to establish relationships of trust between individuals in a partnership it may be a great deal more difficult to do so with the organisations that they represent.

TIP: Ensure that partners work together as openly and transparently as possible in order to build respect - the pre-condition for trust!

Finding a Common Language

EQUAL partnerships involve several different layers of language which include:

- the national language of the country/region in which the DP is situated,

- different sector/organisational languages – jargon used by specific institutions and sectors,

- EQUAL terminology – different understanding of terms such as "empowerment", "equal opportunities" and "innovation",

- culturally sensitive language, and

- partnership language and the use of value-laden terms which each partner/individual representative interprets differently e.g. trust, equality.

Those working within a partnership need to be sensitive to these strands and seek clarity in their use of language so that all partners can understand what is meant by a specific term and there are no hidden meanings that can be misinterpreted.

TIP: Build a common language together by developing your own partnership glossary!

Leadership

Clear leadership is vital for EQUAL partnerships but it raises a number of issues in relation to its style and exercise in view of the equitable basis of collaboration upon which partnerships are founded. Leadership of a DP depends upon a range of factors including contextual issues, partnership type and size, the EQUAL theme being addressed, the urgency of the required action and the personalities of those involved in its development. In some cases EQUAL requirements at a national level influence leadership dynamics within the partnership. For example, in some Member States DPs are required to nominate a 'lead partner' to act as the accountable body for the partnership while in others more devolved and flexible arrangements are encouraged. Ideally, partnerships will include people with diverse leadership competencies so that the different partners can jointly tackle challenges. It is also important that leadership roles are transparent and clearly defined so that expectations of them are shared and understood by all partners with an acceptance that these may change over time.

TIP: Don't be afraid of leadership – accept that it will change over time and develop processes to allow all partners to contribute towards it!

7. Development and testing: using communication, reporting and evaluation systems

Communication

Strategies need to be developed to share information both internally among partners and within partner organisations themselves so that individual partner representatives ensure organisational buy-in to the partnership. This is key to the promotion of transparency and trust-building among partners. External communication to stakeholders and the general public is also needed to promote and mainstream the work of the partnership. This is important for maintaining the engagement of wider stakeholders and people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, and ensuring that they are involved and consulted.

Establishing good communication among partners

Portugal: Públicos Diferentes. Iguais Oportunidades

This DP's communication system was created with:

- a dedicated member of the project staff responsible for circulation of all project information among partners.

- Regular partner meetings (once a month with all the partners; twice a month with the thematic group partner).

- Production of concise documents about the DP's meetings that are distributed among partners.

- Activity maps every month where different partner roles and responsibilities are made clear.

- Sharing information about each partner and their goals besides the EQUAL project.

- A periodic newsletter about the project to which every partner contributes - not just about the project and their responsibilities but also about themselves.

- Regular internal evaluation meetings.

- Discussions sessions about communication.

- Building an environment of trust and friendship.

Suggestions for strong communication strategies include:

- communication "means" (e-mail, newsletters etc.) need to be targeted at specific target audiences (for example internal versus external) and serve specific communication goals (information, motivation, initiation of a consultation, getting agreement, steering etc.),

- messages can be drawn up in different styles (objective, subjective, business-like, informal etc.),

- it is best to draw up a communication plan that specifies who will communicate to who, by which means, what style, how regularly and why.

Specific suggestions can be made for:

Internal Communication:

- a variety of means are suggested to give feedback within the partnership: regular meetings, telephone conferencing, e-mail, an Internet platform, workshops, newsletters,

- this can be supported by having a communication unit within the partnership or a staff member responsible for information,

- using complementary communication skills and resources from different partners,

- encourage the development of personal communication skills, and

- being open and transparent - allowing partners to say how they feel and discuss problems.

External Communication:

- producing newsletters, press releases, using Internet platforms and websites, holding and participating in seminars and conferences,

- establishing media relationships – partnering with a local newspaper or engaging a journalist to follow the work,

- having a dedicated person who can communicate the work of the partnership outwards to relevant journals/papers etc.,

- creating links and communication with official structures,

- training on information issues, and

- building wider networks.

Using an Internet platform

Austria: RepaNet

RepaNet uses a structured approach to communication through an Internet platform for accounting, monitoring contributions, voting and reporting. Working in this way is seen as simpler and less time-consuming than having meetings although obviously not all of them could be substituted. Users are trained to work with the platform in workshops and there are different access levels linked to partner roles and responsibilities. It is seen as a validation tool that promotes transparency by allowing members to improve and check on participation.

Portugal: Mudança de Maré

This DP has developed a successful online Document Administration System (Sistema de Administração Documental/SAD) in order to manage partnership information, produce reports and develop Documentation Centres that specialise in the different fields in which partners work. This system can be visited on www.ajism.org/mm

TIP: Share and circulate information on the development of all key activities!

Building wider networks

Portugal: ConVidas (Permanent Platform for Reconciliation)

In order to encourage online cooperation among institutions, various local entities were invited to take part in a Permanent Platform for Reconciliation of Work and Family Life, a broad network that is representative of different interests and approaches. The aims of the Platform, which meets on a quarterly basis, are to reflect on, discuss and assess the situation in the Covilhã area with regard to the reconciliation issue, interventions to resolve problems identified, and on-going monitoring of the ConVidas intervention. 32 organisations participate in this Platform. They include representatives from: five formal partners (Beira Serra - Local Development Association, Covilhã Municipal Council, Business Nucleus, the Joint Trade Unions of Castelo Branco and University of Beira Interior), as well as from Regional Social Security authorities; the Employment Centre and Health Centre; Educational Co-ordination; Parents' Association - Primary and Secondary Schools; 10 Parish Councils from within the catchments area; two entrepreneurs; two trade union delegates; three representatives of the family support services (children, elderly, disabled) and a public transport firm.

Building wider networks (cont.)

Ireland: Equal at Work – The Dublin Employment Pact

The Equal at Work Partnership is a member of the National Adaptability Thematic Group and has made joint submissions with the NSS to the National Centre for Partnership ("Workplace of the Future" Consultative Process). It is also involved on the National EQUAL Mainstreaming Group and the EU Thematic Working Group.

Formal reporting

Communication also involves formal reporting both internally to partners and externally to EQUAL Managing Authorities and National Support Structures. Most DPs have exhaustive reporting mechanisms. These include:

Internal reporting:

- each partner reports regularly on their role at meetings (monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly) but reports should also be made on the functioning of partnership itself (see also brief 8 on maintaining involvement),
- written reports that are compiled and shared at meetings (for example made by the co-ordinator), and
- reports through access to Internet platforms.

Reporting to EQUAL Managing Authorities and NSSs:

- external reporting is subject to national requirements, and
- at the very least, there are annual reports on DP activities relative to their workplan and the milestones as stated in the Development Partnership Agreement (including its transnational component).

TIP: Use reporting processes to review and revise your work!

Reporting

Sweden: Diversity in Västernorrland
Reports within the DP

In order to obtain effective reporting from subprojects, this DP decided that written reports were to be presented prior to DP meetings. The reports are for information only but sometimes discussion is needed if there are problems to be resolved or success stories to be shared. The reports make it possible to monitor the overall development of the partnership. Dissemination is decided upon by the DP and has involved an increasing need to send out reminders as this has grown. There are always two standing items on the agenda for DP meetings concerning reporting from national and transnational working groups. They include questions about what has happened since the previous month, what is planned, who is involved and financial matters relating to this.

Reports to others

The DP submits reports to the Swedish ESF Council at regular six-month intervals. For transnational work a short account is presented after each co-ordination period of responsibility. An annual report of the DP's undertakings is compiled by the co-ordinator. It is important to provide feedback to the management of the partner organisations but also to allow broad dissemination to other interested parties. Most reports issued by the DP are compiled by the co-ordinator and are supplemented and approved by DP members prior to distribution.

Using learning (or formative) evaluation systems

Learning evaluations seek to strengthen or improve an intervention by examining the quality of its implementation and the organisational context, personnel, structures and procedures. As a change-oriented evaluation approach, it is especially attuned to assessing in an on-going way, any discrepancies between the expected direction and results of the programme and what is happening in reality, to analysing strengths and weaknesses, uncovering obstacles, barriers or unexpected opportunities, and generating understandings about how the intervention could be implemented better.

In a learning evaluation, the evaluator, based on an analysis of the intervention logic (see brief 5 for more on intervention logic in the logical framework), the outputs and the results and impacts, collects and analyses data over the lifecycle of the programme and gives timely feedback of evaluation findings to the partnership actors to inform on-going decision-making and action.

Evaluators conducting a learning evaluation ask many different kinds of questions and use a variety of methods to address them. Questions are commonly open-ended and exploratory, aimed at uncovering the processes by which the intervention takes shape, establishing what has changed from the original design and why, or assessing soft organisational factors such as the extent of 'buy-in' by practitioner staff to the goals and intended outcomes of the partnership. Learning evaluation questions also investigate the relationship between inputs and outcomes, which can involve the formulation and measurement of early or short-term outcome measures. These often have a process flavour and serve as interim markers of more tangible longer term outcomes.

See also brief 5 on setting up evaluation systems.

Evaluation of socio-economic development:
Formative evaluation
http://www.evalsed.info/frame_techniques_part1_5.asp

Evaluation processes

Ireland: Sonas DP Ireland Ltd.

Based on Social Auditing through a continuous process involving stakeholders (clients, communities, funders). This system is inclusive and idealistic but very time-consuming. It involves: identifying aims and objectives; establishing key performance indicators; using a questionnaire and feedback to the Social Audit team. The element that has been most useful to the DP is the establishment of key performance indicators.

France: De la précarité à l'emploi durable

Similar to process used by Sonas (Ireland) but places more emphasis on feedback to funders. It uses a committee for experimentation; assesses work progress (conditioned by regional & political agendas); has a Funders Committee that also evaluates EQUAL work and an operational group that uses training tools and assesses impact on beneficiaries.

Sweden: Diversity in Västernorrland

The DP co-finances a graduate student in sociology from Mid-Sweden University who follows the work over a three-year period. The DP is able to comment on the research plan for this (which covers a period longer than EQUAL). The research and education department of the Association of Local Authorities contributes expertise in quantitative methodology that supports the evaluation. Certain subinitiatives have their own evaluator linked to their undertakings. Some evaluation is conducted through the Swedish ESF council. The DP meeting structure serves as an on-going self-evaluation of day-to-day work.

8. Development and testing: maintaining involvement and commitment

Maintaining involvement and participation

Making sure that partners are engaged and feel committed to the partnership is vital to the development and testing process. A sense of ownership and a feeling of identity with the partnership usually grow through working together. This is linked closely to the issue of accountability. Challenges include power imbalances and perceptions that a particular partner dominates because of its resources or influence; conflicting loyalties among partner representatives to the partnership and to their own organisation, and difficulties in being able to share frank criticism about the performance of a particular partner. A strong monitoring and reporting system with regular partner meetings to ascertain progress (see also reporting in brief 7) may help here as well as a "commitment to equity" - ensuring that partners and their contributions to the partnership are valued on an equitable basis even though they may be perceived as unequal outside it.

> **TIP: Put accountability at the heart of your partnership!**

What worked

- Regular DP meetings
- Rotating venues through partnership
- Involving national co-ordinators of the strands
- Shared publicity good for ownership
- Visits to partners – to identify their yearly delivery plan and review finances. Some partners drew up extensive review reports of their previous partnership years as well as future plans

What did not work

- Travelling distances
- Initially made some partners nervous about hosting these meetings, but they soon got used to them
- Strand co-ordinators had lots of other work as they were the more experienced members of staff
- Hard to motivate staff to submit regular reports particularly when strand coordinators were very busy, but on the whole they were submitted on time
- Consultation time and some administrative problems meant that less adventurous partners held back from delivering as they were waiting for initiative publicity

Ensuring commitment and accountability

Ireland: EQUAL at work – The Dublin Employment Pact

A weakness in the development of this DP was not evaluating the actual commitment of partners as the initiative progressed. Commitment varied naturally in direct relationship to the individual quantifiable gain partner organisations could determine for themselves in the process/initiative. This was reflected in various ways e.g. the status/seniority of representatives seconded by partner organisations, attendance at meetings etc. Monitoring this was not done well, except informally, and this was picked up by the learning evaluation system. In this DP's case remedial action was taken in a particular case of waning partner commitment. The remedial action worked but would have been much more effective if identified and acted upon earlier in the process.

Suggestion: *A systematic monitoring/tracking tool to check commitment could be developed and included in the brief of a learning evaluator with strategies for remedial action.*

Great Britain: JIVE (Joint Interventions) Partners

Regular meetings: DP meetings where partners give reports and hear about wider aspects of the initiative with a core management report. Networking meetings for initiative staff including finance and administration officers. Initially held six-monthly meetings for all initiative staff to meet and discuss current issues or hear about other aspects of the initiative they are not directly responsible for.

Shared publicity: Sharing pre-agreed publicity and promotional material that includes all partners and acts as a sort of corporate ID. Includes poster displays that are available for partners to use.

Methods for maintaining engagement

- **Continuous regular contact** where partners constantly touch base through conferences, seminars, workshops, meetings, discussions, reviews, newsletters, e-mail, phone calls and visits

- **Practical engagement** through an emphasis on productivity and the demonstration of some early form of tangible output that can transmit a sense of achievement

- **Reinforcing goals and objectives** and using strong action plans

- **Creating an open atmosphere** with clear and transparent procedures and links with wider stakeholders

- **Clear leadership** which positively promotes the work of the partnership and participation within it

- **Building good relationships** by using informal activities such as evenings out together, visits etc

- **Mentoring** by proactively supporting and encouraging partners who are held back by issues such as lack of resources/experience

- **Valuing** all partners and their contributions on an equitable basis at all times

TIP: Positively promote partnership engagement and reward this!

Getting institutional buy-in

During this phase of partnership-building there is a growing need to ensure organisational commitment to the partnership as opposed to just that of individuals. It is important that individuals representing organisations within the partnership have a "licence to operate" and speak authoritatively on their behalf. Such mandates need to be checked regularly. If authority appears limited the partnership needs to find ways to change this. Methods of ensuring institutional buy-in include:

- knowing partners well and being sure of their professionalism (easiest in a small DP),

- regular reviews to explain the nature and purpose of the DP and its work,

- involving different individuals from the management of a partner organisation - senior personnel invited to seminars and meetings or asked to chair and participate in events, contacted with updates and information,

- using a dedicated worker to bring organisations on board,

- dissemination of information about the DP in different organisational newsletters,

- holding events on different partner premises,

- holding open lunches to disseminate the work of the DP, and

- reports sent to executive meetings of different institutions in the DP.

TIP: Involve and inform senior staff from partner organisations in your work!

Ensuring compliance

Making sure partners do what they have agreed to do

Portugal: Públicos Diferentes. Iguais Oportunidades

Every three months the DP draws up a table with the activities of the initiative for that period pointing out who is responsible for what. In every meeting the table is checked in order to see how things are going. Also every month a small table of the work to do with preview and realisation outlines is made. This seems to work because no one likes to be shown up as not having completed their work.

It is important to find positive ways to make sure that partners do what they agreed to do at the start of the partnership and contribute fairly to its work. Suggestions for this include:

- applying targets,

- holding regular meetings about all aspects of work with partners reporting on their roles and revisit written minutes with action points,

- reminding all members of the Partnership Agreement and their obligations within this, and

- promoting trust.

TIP: Be sure that each partner is seriously involved in the partnership!

Conflict management

It is important that problem-solving mechanisms are in place within a partnership so that there are established processes for dealing with issues that may cause conflict. This involves encouraging transparency and openness so that problems can be defined and reflected upon. It is also important to remember that a conflict or crisis within a DP can be a learning opportunity and lead to improved ways of working.

Methods of overcoming obstacles

- Encouraging open discussion and using dialogue and communication to clear the air

- Dedicating time to solving the problem

- Ensuring that the partnership is adequately and suitably staffed

- Being aware of possible problems that may arise and solutions and methods to address them – a good monitoring system may be helpful for this

- Drawing on the balance of partners and partnership structures – size, strength etc

- Ensuring all partners have equal visibility within the partnership

- Becoming skilled as good moderators

- Using a mediation process if necessary

- Adopting a flexible approach with a willingness to change in order to regenerate the partnership after conflict

TIP: Heighten awareness of the strength of the partnership so that partners are convinced that working together is better than working individually and that all partners are equal within it – though not so outside it!

Working with diversity

This involves accepting and working with a variety of different attitudes, cultures and working styles across the partnership. Different approaches to innovation, experimentation, change, decision and responsibility processes must be managed carefully with an acknowledgment of varying levels of partner engagement and availability, working paces and time schedules.

Working with diversity

Portugal: Públicos Diferentes. Iguais Oportunidades

DP meetings are held where everything is open for discussion and an environment where everyone feels valued and comfortable enough to give honest opinions is created. In addition, the DP has drawn on its "soft skills" to:

- Develop a good knowledge about the different partner organisations, including how they work and how this impacts the initiative.

- Identify the positive aspects of each partner's work and "channel" them for the initiative.

- Ensure the involvement and participation of all partners in the delivery of the initiative.

- Be flexible.

TIP: Examine approaches and stereotypes – partnership diversity can add value to different partners!

Flexibility

Change inevitably has an impact upon EQUAL Partnerships and it is important that they are organised flexibly enough to accommodate and adapt to this as they develop. Change may occur internally, as a result of staff changes, or externally, due to the effect of wider contextual influences. Dealing with change involves being creative with methodologies and tools, as well as including different forms of capacity-building within both the partnership and partner organisations so that individuals and the institutions that they represent are equipped to withstand change.

TIP: Always keep open the possibility of changing and revising objectives and methodologies as you develop your partnership!

Time

An appreciation of the time needed to build and develop a partnership is a fundamental necessity. Time spent in discussion and revision, as well as in getting to know each partner and their representatives should never be underestimated. Although DPs work under considerable time pressures it is important that they make space to think through approaches carefully and experiment with these. An awareness of different partner timeframes, and what conditions them, so that the partnership can somehow take these on board is also necessary. These might include public institutions working within election schedules, tight private sector targets and NGO time scales for reporting to donors.

TIP: Take time – it's almost never too late!

9. Mainstreaming and further action

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming should be part of the partnership's work from the very beginning and should not be thought of as a stage chronologically placed after development and testing.

Integrating mainstreaming from the start

Preparation

The mainstreaming process is about finding ways to scale-up, share and replicate for sustainable change. This involves identifying and developing contacts and linkages with policy makers and advisory and implementing bodies in the preparatory process of a partnership's development. Develop an early mainstreaming agenda by identifying and making contact with appropriate channels and institutions for this.

Initiation

Linkages with policy makers and advisory and implementing bodies need to be built upon during the initiation process. Use a system of structured access and/or dialogue, underpinned by the commitment of EQUAL Managing Authorities and National Support Structures to engage such institutions and networks.

Development and testing

As well as working with mainstreaming organisations, EQUAL Partnerships have a major role to play in changing organisational structures through partnership activity. This process involves working within, between and across different institutions in order to promote more effective and creative ways of working, developing the capacity of organisations involved with the partnership and inculcating an awareness of the potential for addressing strategic issues with other sectors. Conduct reviews of partner and stakeholder organisations in order to assess how far they have learned through partnership-building and where the partnership has had most impact.

Working with mainstreaming organisations

Working strategically with mainstreaming organisations such as government departments, national and private sector bodies is vital for this process. A system of structured access and/or dialogue, underpinned by the commitment of EQUAL Managing Authorities and National Support Structures to engage such institutions and networks is important for:

* influencing public policy frameworks, programmes and delivery systems, and ensuring that the purpose and aim of the EQUAL programme becomes a part of national politics,

* harnessing financial resources for further work, and

* enabling successful local pilots to proceed to a mainstreaming strategy.

Sharing within, between and across organisations

As well as working with mainstreaming organisations, EQUAL Partnerships have a major role to play in changing organisational structures through partnership activity. This process involves working within, between and across different institutions in order to promote more effective and creative ways of working, developing the capacity of organisations involved with the partnership and inculcating an awareness of the potential for addressing strategic issues with other sectors. An important part of this work is reviewing partner and stakeholder organisations in order to assess how far they have learned through partnership-building and where the partnership has had most impact.

TIP: Find internal champions to promote wider institutional awareness of the partnership!

Communication channels for mainstreaming

A variety of different communication channels may be used to mainstream the work of EQUAL partnerships (see also brief 7 on communication). Options include:

Within and among DPs: through exchange programmes, meetings, workshops and internal dialogue and linkages among partner representatives and organisations.

Media: Specialised press, local and official press, newspapers, radio, TV.

Internet: Websites, Internet platforms.

Professional organisations: Journals, brochures, publications, legal texts.

Academic links: Universities, colleges, journals, newsletters, conferences, seminars.

Wider networks: National Thematic Groups, learning networks, conferences.

TIP: Integrate mainstreaming into your work right from the start!

Further action

Having an exit/moving-on strategy

EQUAL Partnerships need to think about "moving-on" in the early stages of partnership-building. Developing ideas for further innovative work that seeks to effect real and lasting change is central to this. Possible options include:

- the implementation and dissemination of a DP's methodology throughout the region and eventually at European level,

- becoming an influential part of a lasting national or regional network,

- dissolving and reforming around specific tasks relevant to mainstreaming, future EQUAL proposals etc.,

- working to see that changes are implemented inside partner organisations,

- working more with specific partners on particular aspects of the work,

- developing a new network which has learnt from the challenges of the current DP and can build relationships more successfully as a result, and

- working with other programmes and sharing experiences in a different country.

Making sure that outcomes for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market are sustainable

When a partnership completes its work it is important that the outcomes for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market are sustainable. Suggestions for ensuring this include:

- continuity of the strategy implementation with the support of governmental organisations and social partners throughout the region,

- long-term mainstreaming/sustainability strategies with structured monitoring of impact and outcomes and mechanisms for revisiting the issues after the end of the partnership to measure effects, and

- accepting changes in work methodologies that have demonstrated positive outcomes for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

Preparing for the future

Ireland: EQUAL at work – The Dublin Employment Pact

The Equal at Work Partnership has already held internal meetings around possible future joint work. The outcome to date has been to identify some clear common goals, identify new partners who should be involved and allow old partners to go their own way. The DP also sees its partnership as part of an ever-changing regional partnership infrastructure which easily comes together, dissolves, reforms in different sets, etc. around labour market development issues, with the core value focus on equality/inclusion/progression. Also, alliances and new partnership circles have emerged from the Equal at Work DP. These have crystallised around mainstreaming strategies and will continue to be active in this regard outside of EQUAL. These are the Jobrotation network now pulled together in Dublin through the partnership, the network of Dublin local authorities, health authorities etc. around HR issues and the network of community & voluntary sector organisations in the city which is now developing a series of mainstreaming actions independently of EQUAL.

TIP: Try to organise the sustainability of the initiative/partnership by early involvement of the right people!

Annex with Further Explanation and Examples

This annex contains guidance from the Commission on evaluation, partnership agreements, intellectual property and mainstreaming. This guidance is included here for reference since all Member States have already incorporated this guidance into their national guidelines.

Evaluation

Key points in ensuring effective evaluation

1. Evaluation competence should be brought in early. In particular, this can help clarifying objectives and the intervention logic. This can make subsequent evaluation easier and more successful. In general, in order to ensure independence of the final evaluation, it would be best to use different evaluation teams or resources for the on-going evaluation work than for the final evaluation.

2. Evaluators when they begin their work need to ensure that a feasible evaluation plan is produced and clarify how evaluation outputs will be used. They should also consider that evaluation is wasted without communication of findings.

3. Stakeholders should be involved in the evaluation from the earliest stages, where practicable. This will ensure that the evaluation design and plan will include their priorities and agendas. On the other hand, it may be necessary to be selective in which 'voices' finally determine the evaluation agenda, in order to retain focus and ensure the evaluation is manageable.

4. An interactive approach through regular Steering Committee meetings ensures awareness across the board of choices that need to be made along the way. It will also ensure that evaluators receive sufficient support, access to information and briefing as to changes in context.

5. The importance of evaluation questions in an evaluation design cannot be overstated. The temptation otherwise is to gather large quantities of data and produce sometimes technically sophisticated indicators which make little contribution to practice or policy. There is, of course, a problem formulating the evaluation questions in a way that they are likely to be able to be answered. Whilst this is a technical question, there is here also the overarching concern for their use.

Minimum contents of evaluation terms of reference

- Regulatory framework
- Scope of the evaluation
- Main users and stakeholders of the study
- Evaluative and research questions, including the request for appropriate indicators
- Available knowledge
- Main methods or techniques to be used
- Schedule
- Indicative budget
- Required qualifications of the team
- Structure of the proposal
- Submission rules and adjudication criteria

Quality criteria for evaluations

Output quality criteria:

*   Meeting needs as laid out in ToR
*   Relevant scope and coverage
*   Defensible design and methods
*   Reliable data used
*   Sound analysis
*   Credible results that relate to analysis and data
*   Impartial conclusions showing no bias and demonstrating sound judgement
*   Clear report with executive summaries and annexed supportive data

Process quality criteria:

*   Well drawn terms of reference
*   Sound tender selection process
*   Effective dialogue and feedback throughout evaluation process
*   Adequate information resources available
*   Good management and co-ordination by evaluation team
*   Effective dissemination of reports/outputs to Steering Committee and policy/programme managers
*   Effective dissemination to stakeholders

> More can be found in: Evaluation of socio-economic development: www.evalsed.info

Key elements included in all partnership agreements

*   a diagnosis and an assessment of the specific **problems** in relation to labour market exclusion, discrimination and inequality, to be tackled;

*   a **stakeholder analysis**; identifying and discussing the interest and expectations of people, groups, or organisations that may influence or be influenced by the solution to be developed and tested, and a description of the roles of relevant stakeholders in the work of the Development Partnership;

*   **objectives** and the **strategy** to attain them, reflecting learning from the first round of EQUAL and any other relevant action;

*   a description of the **assumptions**, risks and flexibility requirements;

*   a detailed **work programme** accompanied by a realistic **budget**, both broken down by national and transnational activities/costs;

*   a clear identification of the **role of each partner**, including the **arrangements for steering and managing** the partnership and **administering the financial support** preferably using a commonly agreed system;

*   the methodology and mechanism for **on-going assessment** of activities and achievements, including a description of verifiable **indicators** which demonstrate how the objectives, outputs and results will be measured and assessed;

*   the strategy and mechanisms for implementing a **gender mainstreaming** approach;

*   a demonstration of financial viability: the availability of the necessary **co-financing**, if applicable.

- the commitment of the Development Partnership including its transnational partners to:

  - collaborate on mainstreaming activities at national and European levels;

  - transparency: public access to the results obtained (products, instruments, methods, etc.);

  - capacity-building and empowerment: the Development Partnership has the capacity to mobilise and enable different actors to work together effectively around their common strategy. Particular attention will be given to the arrangements for ensuring that all relevant actors, such as: public authorities, the public employment service, NGOs, the business sector (in particular small- and medium- sized enterprises), and the social partners, can become involved during the life of the partnership. The Development Partnership must show that all partners have fully participated in the planning and development of the Development Partnership Agreement;

  - a learning spirit: the capacity and willingness to learn from others, and to actively co-operate in networking, dissemination and mainstreaming activities at both national and European level.

It is also recommended to include agreements on audit procedures, intellectual property rights, use of logos, liabilities etc.

> **Source:** Commission communication establishing the guidelines for the second round of the Community Initiative EQUAL http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0840en01.pdf

Intellectual property

Mainstreaming is only possible if the Member State, the EC, and all other interested parties (organisations or citizens) have access to the EQUAL products. The existence of such "access right" (including the right to use and to disseminate the products) must be clear to the Development Partnerships. However, the exercise of this access right may entail a breach of the intellectual property rights of the persons who developed the products. Therefore, in order to avoid any conflicts arising at a later stage, the issue should be settled between all parties during initiation.

Any commercial gains or benefits arising out of the exploitation of the products during the funding period must be subtracted from the public funding (due by the Member State and the EU). With regard to products which are exploited after the funding period (if at all possible under the laws of the Member State), all know-how developed during the funding period must remain accessible to the Member State, the EC, and all other interested parties.

Two ways to settle this issue have been proposed:

A **first** alternative may be to provide for a transfer of the intellectual property rights of the DPs and their partners to the Managing Authorities. This would allow the beneficiaries of the transfer to use the products in their own interests (mainly through dissemination and mainstreaming).

In order to be effective, each party who worked on the development of the products must accept such transfer.

However, if, upon completion of EQUAL, the DPs or their partners wish to exploit their products on a commercial basis (if at all possible under the laws of the Member States), the intellectual property rights may have to be re-transferred to the DPs or individual partners in order to make the exploitation fully effective. Agreeing with all partners on a subsequent transfer of intellectual property rights may be quite complicated at this stage.

Under a **second** alternative, the Managing Authorities and the European Commission would agree with the DPs and the partners that the former have the right to access all products developed by the latter. Furthermore, the Member States and the European Commission would have the right to use and to disseminate the products. The DPs would, in other words, grant a "licence" to the Member States and the European Commission. The DPs and their partners would nevertheless remain the owners of their intellectual property rights making it easier for them to commercially exploit their projects after expiry of the funding period, if at all allowed by the laws of the Member State in question.

Since the access, use and dissemination of the results of EQUAL may entail a "breach" of the intellectual property rights of the DPs and their partners, it is recommended to settle this with the partners in an agreement in due time, preferably already in the DPA. Obviously, such agreement would have to be thoroughly checked under national law by local counsel.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming, the integration and incorporation of new ideas and approaches into policy and practice, is challenging. It is up to each Development Partnership to provide evidence for effective, efficient and relevant alternatives in the delivery of inclusive labour market policies that are transferable across Member States and applicable on a larger scale.

In order to obtain the maximum impact from EQUAL, results must be analysed in order to:

*   identify factors leading to inequality and discrimination, and monitoring and analysing the impact or potential impact of the Development Partnerships on the policy priorities and the different grounds of discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market,

*   identify and assess the factors leading to good practice, and

*   benchmark performance.

Activities should thereafter not be limited to dissemination which is only one step in the process of mainstreaming. As with any experiment in a laboratory, the effects of an experiment must be related to a wider (economic, political, cultural, organisational) context to be sustainable. The results of EQUAL must become part of the systematic approach to other policies and programmes, which are carried out on a local, regional, national and European level.

It is incumbent on Development Partnerships to participate in mainstreaming activities as part of their work programme, including those organised by the national Managing Authorities (ie. through their thematic networks). On top of this, there is additional funding available in EQUAL for mainstreaming activities. This additional funding can be used for:

a) Mainstreaming the innovations of EQUAL (action 3) – either from the first round or the second. Applications may be submitted to Managing Authorities by Development Partnerships acting either independently or in groups or by ad hoc consortia of Development Partnership partners, multipliers and experts.

b) Managing Authorities may also fund additional mainstreaming activities (action 3) such as preparation of Guides, good practices or other tools by Development Partnerships as part of the collaboration within European thematic groups.

Source: Commission communication establishing the guidelines for the second round of the Community Initiative EQUAL http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0840en01.pdf

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