

## **In-house Report 135**

### **Mid-Term Evaluation of the UK/GB EQUAL Community Initiative 2000-2006**

**Mid-Term Evaluation of the UK/GB EQUAL  
Community Initiative 2000-2006**

**A Study Carried out on behalf of the Department  
for Work and Pensions**

**by**

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First Published 2004

ISBN 1 84388 268 X

ISSN 1 368 244X

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## **List of Acronyms**

BME – Black and minority ethnic  
CIP – Community Initiative Programme  
CRE – Commission for Racial Equality  
DFES – Department for Education and Skills  
DP – Development Partnership  
DPA – Development Partnership Agreement  
DRC – Disability Rights Commission  
DTI – Department for Trade and Industry  
DWP – Department for Work and Pensions  
ECDB – European Common Database  
EOC – Equal Opportunities Commission  
ESF – European Social Fund  
ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages  
FE – Further Education  
HE – Higher Education  
ICT – Information and Communication Technologies  
ITEC – IT, Electronics and Communications  
LSC – Learning and Skills Council  
MA – Managing Authority  
MPA – Mainstreaming Partnership Agreement  
NAP – National Action Plan  
NHS – National Health Service  
RDA – Regional Development Agency  
SBS – Small Business Service  
SEU – Social Exclusion Unit  
SME – Small and Medium Sized Enterprises  
SRB – Single Regeneration Budget  
TCA – Transnational Co-operation Agreement  
TNG – Thematic Networking Group  
WEFO – Welsh European Funding Office

# 1 SUMMARY

This is the final report of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Community Initiative EQUAL in GB, undertaken by GHK and the Gilfillan Partnership. It is based on a programme of evaluation activity between April 2002 and September 2003, which included surveys of all 76 Round 1 DPs, detailed case study work with a sample of 30, and contacts with key stakeholders and policy representatives.

## 1.1 The Equal Programme

The key objective of the EQUAL programme is to *'test and promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work, through transnational co-operation'*. The programme is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs), underpinned by the principles of innovation, empowerment, mainstreaming, transnationality and equal opportunities. The programme follows a thematic approach and is structured around the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy, and includes activities to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

Of the 76 Round 1 DPs, two thirds have a regional (and devolved administration) or sub-regional focus. The rest are undertaking activities across multiple regions or nationally. The partnerships range in size from four to almost 40 organisations, with lead partners most commonly being local authorities (26%), voluntary and community sector organisations (18%) and the private sector (11%).

## 1.2 Programme and Process Issues

The programme has three discrete phases following an initial application stage. The developmental Action 1 phase was intended to allow DPs to formalise their national and transnational partnerships, and produce Development Partnership Agreements (DPAs) and Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCAs). The DPAs and TCAs set out DPs' detailed plans for the Action 2 implementation phase, to run for up to three years. The Action 3 phase focuses on approaches to mainstreaming the lessons and promising approaches identified by the DPs. Action 3 runs concurrently with Action 2 and six months beyond to enable the conclusion of dissemination and mainstreaming activities.

### 1.2.1 The Application Phase

Chapter 3 of the report describes the application and appraisal processes followed in Round 1. Initial awareness of the programme was high, both as a result of promotional activities and knowledge in advance of the formal call for applications. Once the decision to submit a bid was made, concepts and

applications were produced either by a core partnership group, a single lead partner (most commonly) or on a consensual basis between all initial partners (less commonly). In some cases consultancy support was also used.

The DP selection process was considered by most DPs to be equitable, although some concerns were raised about perceived conflicts of interest between the selection panels and organisations submitting applications themselves. A key feature of the selection process was the involvement of policy representatives, who were well placed to shape the design of the programme in terms of thematic focus.

### **1.2.2 *The Action 1 Development Phase***

The development phase of the programme (Action 1) provided an important opportunity for partnership building and producing the fine detail of plans. While much of this activity was fairly intangible, its importance should not be under-estimated. However, it is also clear that more could have been undertaken in terms of initial research and engaging disadvantaged groups in shaping the DPs.

Activities centred around the production of the DPAs, TCAs and securing match funding commitments. In the case of establishing transnational collaboration agreements, the DPs found the process relatively straightforward, although the differential adherence to the programme timetable across Member States emerged as a common area of difficulty.

One key lesson from Round 1 was the importance of managing the transition between programme phases and, perhaps more important, between individuals with responsibility for DP management. This was particularly the case where one individual led on application production, another led during the Action 1 phase, before a project manager was recruited at the start of Action 2.

### **1.2.3 *The Action 2 Implementation Phase***

A number of the case study DPs described delays in receiving final approval for their DPAs, as described in Chapter 5 of the report. These delays led to slippage in implementation of between three and six months, and while initially partnerships considered that they would be able to make up for lost time this proved in some cases to be optimistic. At the time of the last field visits to the case study DPs nearly half were on course with their work plans – while the wider DP survey found that only one in five considered they were entirely on schedule.

The partnerships have proved to be robust over the course of Action 2, with the majority of changes taking place around their peripheries. The main reasons for partners leaving their DPs were when individual contacts changed jobs, and the organisational link with the DP was not continued.

A series of activities were undertaken in the early stages of Action 2, although in some cases these could arguably have been undertaken, or at least prepared for, in Action 1. Key activities included:

- The recruitment and training of staff – notably project managers and administrative staff.
- Undertaking initial ‘empowerment’ activities – in some cases which would have been better prepared for in Action 1.
- Research activities and the development of tools.
- Providing services and running pilots.

A series of early impacts were identified and described in Chapter 5, including the adoption of early models and tools developed, and early impacts on the recipients of pilot services and products.

#### **1.2.4 The Action 3 Mainstreaming Phase**

Mainstreaming is key to the achievement of the EQUAL programme objectives, and impressive progress has been made in setting the foundations for an effective approach. Key to the process are the eight Thematic Network Groups (TNGs), described in Chapter 12 and comprising DPs and policy representatives on a thematic basis. At the time of the study, preparations for the Action 3 phase were ongoing, with DPs preparing bids for Action 3 resources via their respective TNGs.

Thematic Mainstreaming Strategies were also being developed at the TNG level, which are reviewed in Chapter 6 along with other early Action 3 activities. One early issue was the small share of the DP population that were planning to submit combined Action 3 bids. While the level of financial responsibilities on lead DPs for the Action 3 may have been off-putting, a number of DPs were submitting co-ordinated bids within their own themes.

#### **1.2.5 Monitoring, Evaluation, Support and Guidance**

Chapter 7 reviewed monitoring and evaluation practices, with the key issue for DPs being the scale of administrative tasks and ensuring suitable resources are allocated to ensuring compliance with monitoring requirements. A mismatch was also identified between the monitoring requirements and the aims and objectives of the programme and individual DPs. In many cases, lead partners had to also provide support for their delivery partners, as well as co-ordinating the collection, verification and submission of monitoring information. In many cases, the scale of resources required to meet the financial and performance monitoring requirements of the programme were beyond their initial expectations, and had not been adequately resourced in their initial plans.

Good progress has been made with DPs' own evaluations, with almost a third of the case study DPs (9 out of 30) having produced some form of evaluation report on progress to date.

The support and guidance provided by the Support Units was valued highly, with three quarters of the case study DPs describing being either satisfied or very satisfied. Guidance materials, workshops and events, and initial project visits were all felt to have contributed positively to DP development and early activities.

### **1.3 The Principles of EQUAL**

The EQUAL programme is based on six 'principles', namely: partnership, innovation, empowerment, transnationality, mainstreaming and equal opportunities. Chapters 8 to 13 describe the findings of the evaluation in terms of the EQUAL principles in detail.

#### **1.3.1 Partnership**

One of the clearest examples of innovation in the programme to date has been the DPs themselves, with a range of partners being brought together around common interests and themes. The case study DPs were fairly evenly split between partnerships built on a core of previous collaborative relationships, and effectively new partnerships established for the EQUAL programme. The benefits of the partnership approach are already becoming apparent, in particular increasing the breadth and depth of specific knowledge and experience, improving the quality of the DP and its products, and leading to unexpected synergies and added value.

In terms of their structure, the DPs have developed around two models:

- 'Centralised' partnerships - where the steering group acts as the main driver, typically involving a smaller number of organisations with more fluid sub-groups.
- 'Hub and spoke' partnerships - with more devolved project or site-based structures, and tending to operate on a wider scale with a large number of distinct components.

#### **1.3.2 Innovation**

The most common form of innovation planned by the DPs is of a process nature, with potential impacts being more towards practice than policy, although most of the potentially innovative aspects are still being piloted and tested.

However, one of the most striking aspects of the programme to date has been the way in which the partnerships, and the DP model itself, has provided a framework to draw new actors together to work in new contexts and add a rich range of perspectives to what is being developed.

### **1.3.3 Empowerment**

Empowerment is probably the most difficult of the EQUAL principles to deliver effectively, with many DPs facing challenges in the identification of and engagement with suitable individuals. Here the limited initial research undertaken in Action 1, a potential mechanism for starting the engagement process, was paralleled by delays in plans to develop empowerment sub-groups or involve target groups more widely on DP steering groups.

The main empowerment activity to date, in 14 of the 30 case study DPs, has been through the delivery of pilot products and services. In some cases, target groups are being trained to manage delivery themselves, and while they are having an increasing role in shaping the delivery and research aspects of the DP it is clear that greater emphasis could be placed on empowerment activities during Action 1.

### **1.3.4 Transnationality**

EQUAL also involves the DPs forming transnational partnerships with DPs in other Member States. The majority of GB partnerships have signed up with three or four other DPs, although the minimum eligibility requirement for the programme is one transnational partner.

Transnational partnership structures and operational arrangements are becoming clearer as Action 2 progresses. Increasingly, bilateral relationships are emerging based on common areas of interest or a shared focus on a particular tool or approach. In terms of activities, two or three meetings have generally taken place, with the emphasis so far on exchanging information rather than joint development. DPs with limited previous transnational experience appear to have benefited most from their early experiences, largely in terms of how best to structure and manage their transnational relationships.

### **1.3.5 Mainstreaming**

At this stage of the programme, the focus has been more on preparing the conditions for effective mainstreaming than on actual mainstreaming activities themselves. Clear and strong progress has been made in different areas:

- **The Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs)** have been established, and following clarification and communication of their role are progressing at different rates and in different ways. An increased emphasis on the contribution DPs can make to their respective TNGs (as partners rather than service recipients), along with the key role played by the TNG chairs in progressing the groups, has helped establish the TNGs for the future.
- **DP policy contacts** – the TNGs are not the only route to mainstreaming, and the DPs made considerable early efforts to engage with relevant policy representatives. A range of approaches to engagement have been followed, from the inclusion of policy representatives on DP

steering or sub-groups to making initial contacts to be followed up once there are findings to report.

Despite the positive progress made, there remain a series of challenges for future mainstreaming activities. These include ensuring policy 'buy-in' and continued engagement, widening the range of policy representatives, and establishing mechanisms for ensuring the cross-thematic exchange of lessons.

### **1.3.6 Equal Opportunities**

The equal opportunities principle is central to both the operation of the DPs and the content of their proposed activities. However, in some cases DPs have experienced difficulties in addressing equal opportunities issues in a concrete manner – either due to the need for better articulation or clearer and more systematic thinking about implementation.

A series of approaches have been followed to implement DPs' equal opportunities activities, including:

- **Through the DP structure** – for example ensuring the issue remains central by inclusion as a standing agenda item, or the establishment of equal opportunities sub-groups.
- **Using service level agreements to support equal opportunities** – for example to make partners sign up to equality principles.
- **Using 'champions' within and outside the DP** - some DPs have engaged an expert or 'champion' for equal opportunities activities to work alongside their partners.

## **1.4 Recommendations**

The overall conclusion of the evaluation is that good progress is being made in the implementation of what is in itself a particularly innovative programme. As innovation is accompanied by risk, a series of challenges were faced in the initial stages of Round 1, as shared understandings of the programme, its characteristics and requirements were developed. This has provided a series of lessons that will usefully inform both the continuation of Round 1 and the new Round 2 DPs.

Particular areas of success include the establishment of the DPs themselves, their initial outputs and work in progress, and the levels of engagement with policy representatives (either through the TNGs or via links with individual DPs). Areas where attention could focus for Round 2 include ensuring Action 1 activities are focused and effective, starting work on empowerment activities earlier, and ensuring the DPs are suitably resourced to meet the programme administration requirements.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations based on Round 1 of the programme, and of relevance both to Round 1 and Round 2 DPs,

Managing Authorities and Thematic Network Groupings. The key recommendations for process issues include:

- Expanding the role of TNG and policy representatives in the Round 2 application stage.
- Following a more prescriptive approach to Action 1 in Round 2 – to include formalised workplans and evaluation activities covering Action 1.
- Instigating face-to-face meetings earlier between Support Units and DPs to discuss queries with DPAs in Round 2.
- Encouraging DPs to work together on mainstreaming activities under Action 3.
- Consider additional Support Unit visits after the end of Action 2 and during Action 3.
- Ensuring DPs are suitably resourced to deal with the demands of the administrative and monitoring requirements of the programme.
- Considering making changes to the monitoring information collected, to better reflect programme and DP aims, objectives and impacts.
- Ensuring that the lessons and good practice identified from Round 1 is identified, collected and shared with Round 2 DPs.

Key recommendations around the EQUAL principles include:

- Ensuring Round 2 DPs consider the importance of a strong central steer, establishment of effective communication systems and establishing contractual arrangements with their partners.
- Encouraging Round 2 DPs to take early steps towards empowerment from the outset of the programme.
- Ensure that cross-thematic links are made via the TNGs.
- Take steps to ensure that Round 2 DPs have a continued and more explicit focus on equal opportunities implementation strategies – for example through recruiting expert support.

## **Part 1: General Introduction**

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This Chapter provides an introduction to the report, including an overview of the methodology, a summary of the key characteristics and principles of the EQUAL programme, and an overview of the Development Partnerships (DPs) in GB.

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Community Initiative EQUAL in Great Britain, based on a programme of research beginning in April 2002 and following the implementation of the first round of the initiative.

The primary objective of the EQUAL programme is to *'test and promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work, through transnational co-operation'*<sup>1</sup>. The programme operates within a framework set out at the European level by the European Commission and the Member States, and is funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) under the 2000 to 2006 programming period.

### 2.1 Methodology of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The Mid-Term evaluation ran from April 2002 to the completion of this final report in September 2003. It is based primarily around a case study approach, supported by interviews with the wider DP population and key programme stakeholders.

The evaluation comprised three stages, including multiple visits to 30 case study DPs (featuring interviews with DP project managers, partners and beneficiaries) and on-going contact with stakeholders, policy and TNG representatives. The three stages of the evaluation were as follows:

- Stage 1: Project Commencement – April to September 2002
- Stage 2: Second Fieldwork Round – November 2002 to March 2003
- Stage 3: Final Fieldwork/Project Completion – April to September 2003.

The evaluation followed a primarily qualitative methodology, which was considered most relevant to the nature of the programme and the specific aims and objectives of the study. As EQUAL is a new programme, which is itself innovative in terms of the structures and processes developed for it, a formative approach was followed.

The different stages of the evaluation, each of which featured contact with the 30 case study DPs and with all the active DPs in stages 1 and 3, allowed DP development to be tracked from initial approval to the commencement of Action 3. It also allowed the findings from the more detailed DP case studies to be compared to the wider DP population.

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<sup>1</sup> EQUAL: Community Initiative Programme for Great Britain and Gibraltar 2000-2006 ESF Unit, Department for Education and Employment

The Annexes to this report provide more detail on the evaluation methodology and associated processes.

## 2.2 The EQUAL Programme in GB

The priorities for the programme were set out in the GB Community Initiative Programme (CIP), approved by the European Commission in March 2001. The CIP was based on a wide consultation process to ensure the programme established a sharp policy focus, and to identify policy gaps where transnational co-operation could be beneficial.

A number of features differentiate the programme from other ESF activities. These include:

- A specific focus on combating labour market discrimination and inequality.
- The aim of testing and promoting new and innovative approaches - i.e. it is a development-focused rather than a strictly delivery-focused programme.
- A strong partnership focus, in particular the Development Partnership (DP) approach being followed, and featuring both national and transnational collaboration.
- The encouragement of target group involvement through the principle of empowerment.
- Providing appropriate orientation information for asylum seekers, to raise awareness of the requirements of the labour market.

The EQUAL programme follows the previous ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives, which operated in Great Britain between 1995 and 2000. EQUAL shares many of the features of the previous initiatives. However, lessons from the previous initiatives have informed the structure and implementation of the EQUAL programme. These have led to features of EQUAL such as the DP approach and the establishment of Thematic Networking Groups (at the GB national and European levels) to support mainstreaming and overall policy focus.

## 2.3 Main principles of EQUAL

EQUAL is structured around a series of operational principles:

- **Partnership** – with DPs being established to undertake EQUAL activities, consisting of a range of different actors working collaboratively to develop integrated solutions to a given problem.
- **Innovation** – where new ideas and approaches are trialled and evaluated for wider dissemination and mainstreaming.

- **Empowerment** – where disadvantaged and excluded groups take a role in the development and implementation of EQUAL activities.
- **Transnationality** – where collaborative arrangements with DPs in other Member States aim to add value by sharing experience and transferring delivery lessons.
- **Mainstreaming** – where the lessons of EQUAL influence policy at the local, national and European levels.
- **Equal Opportunities** – where the programme supports equality and diversity as a cross-cutting principle.

The programme is also characterised by a **thematic approach**, *'tackling the problems common to different types of discrimination and inequality, rather than focusing on a specific target group'*<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.4 The Thematic Approach

The thematic basis for EQUAL is defined in the context of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy (namely employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities), as well as activities to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

Within these pillars are nine thematic fields, eight of which are being followed in GB. Each DP focuses its activities on one theme. The Equal Opportunities theme G, focusing on reconciling family and professional life and the re-integration of women who have left the labour market, is not being followed in GB. Actions relating to work-life balance have been included in the Adaptability pillar and issues relating to access to employment are covered by the Employability pillar.

The themes sit within the pillars as follows:

▪ Pillar 1: Employability
---------------------------

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Theme A: Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all.</li> <li>– Theme B: Providing opportunities to promote potential for ethnic minorities within the world of work.</li> </ul> |
|---|

▪ Pillar 2: Entrepreneurship
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<sup>2</sup> EQUAL: Community Initiative Programme for Great Britain and Gibraltar 2000-2006 ESF Unit, Department for Education and Employment

- Theme C: Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas.
- Theme D: Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs.

#### ▪ Pillar 3: Adaptability

- Theme E: Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market.
- Theme F: Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies.

#### ▪ Pillar 4: Equal opportunities

- Theme G: Reconciling family and professional life and the re-integration of women who have left the labour market. *Not being followed in GB – see above.*
- Theme H: Reducing gender gaps and supporting job de-segregation.

#### ▪ Asylum seekers

- Theme I: Providing assistance to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

## 2.5 Programme Structure

DP activities under EQUAL are structured around four stages or 'actions'. Action 1 is the development phase, lasting for six months, during which initial applications can be refined and partnerships built (worth 5% of budget). This is followed by Action 2, the implementation phase, which lasts for between two and three years (75% of budget). Running concurrently with the implementation phase is Action 3 – which focuses on dissemination and mainstreaming activities and can run for up to six months beyond the end of Action 2 (15% of budget). The programme also includes Action 4, which covers technical assistance and other support (5% of budget).

The total funding for EQUAL in GB is **€387.91 million**, split between two rounds. Round 1 started in 2001 and Round 2 will begin in 2004. This evaluation therefore concentrates on the Round 1 DPs, with the aim of feeding lessons into the second round.

### Programme Timetable (Round One)

- Action 1 in GB ran for a six-month period from 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 to 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2002. Total declared expenditure in GB for Round 1, Action 1 was £6,167,899 (€9,475,386).

- Action 2 began on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2003 and runs to 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2005.

- Action 3 runs from 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2003 to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2005 (i.e. six months after the end date of Action 2).

## 2.6 Programme Mapping

There were 77 successful bidders in GB going into the start of Action 1. These 77 DPs closely matched the indicative thematic split as set out in the CIP. This is shown in the table below.

### GB Development Partnerships by Theme (at Action 1)

Pillar	CIP <sup>3</sup>	No. of GB. DPs	Theme	CIP	No. of GB DPs
Employability	40%	33 (41%)	A	30%	24 (30%)
			B	10%	9 (11%)
Entrepreneurship	20%	17 (21%)	C	10%	9 (11%)
			D	10%	8 (10%)
Adaptability	25%	20 (25%)	E	12.5%	15 (19%)
			F	12.5%	5 (6%)
Equal Opportunities	5%	4 (5%)	H	5%	4 (5%)
Asylum Seekers	5%	3 (4%)	I	5%	3 (4%)
Total	95% <sup>4</sup>	77 (95%)		95%	77 (95%)

One DP (from Theme A) dropped out after Action 1, citing the complexity of its proposed match funding model. The DP had been hoping to use match funding from companies participating in its activities, but could not get the required information from these potential partners.

There are therefore currently **76 DPs operating in GB** just over one year into Action 2. There are now 23 DPs in Theme A.

### 2.6.1 DP Coverage

The coverage of the DPs is determined by the areas in which partners are undertaking activities. Around **two thirds (67%) of the DPs in GB are**

<sup>3</sup> Indicative split of budget by Pillar and Theme

<sup>4</sup> 5% of indicative budget is set aside for Technical Assistance

operating at a regional (or devolved administration), sub-regional or local level.

The vast majority of DPs have retained the same geographical coverage in Action 2 as proposed in their initial applications. The table below shows the split between local/regional DPs, multi-regional DPs and national-level DPs.

#### DP Coverage – All DPs

DP Coverage	Number (and %) of DPs
<i>Single Region (England)</i>	40 (53%)
<i>Scotland-only</i>	8 (11%)
<i>Wales-only</i>	3 (4%)
<b>Total Local/regional/devolved administration DPs</b>	<b>51 (67%)</b>
<i>Multiple English regions</i>	6 (8%)
<i>Multiple English and Welsh regions</i>	3 (4%)
<b>Total Multi-region DPs</b>	<b>9 (12%)</b>
<i>All regions (England)</i>	5 (7%)
<i>All regions (England) and Wales</i>	1 (1%)
<i>All regions (England) and Scotland</i>	1 (1%)
<i>GB National (England, Scotland and Wales)</i>	8 (11%)
<i>GB National and Northern Ireland</i>	1 (3%)
<b>Total National DPs</b>	<b>16 (21%)</b>
<b>Total Number of GB DPs</b>	<b>76 (100%)</b>

In addition to the GB National Support Unit, there are separate Support Units for DPs concentrating on the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales. The table above shows that a significant number of GB-National administered DPs are also undertaking activities in the devolved administrations.

There is one DP whose scope includes Northern Ireland as it is focusing on the situation of asylum seekers.

#### 2.6.2 Regional spread

A third of the DPs are operating in multiple regions – or in all regions nationally. There is a good overall spread of DP activity across the regions. The regions of London and the North West of England show the largest concentrations of EQUAL activity.

The table below shows the number of DPs that are operating in each of the English regions, as well as the devolved administrations.

### Number of DPs per region / devolved administration

Region / devolved administration	Number of DPs operating in region	Number of DPs operating <i>only</i> in this region
London	32	11
North West	29	8
Yorkshire & Humberside	24	4
West Midlands	23	4
South East	22	4
North East	20	1
South West	20	5
East of England	18	2
East Midlands	18	1
Scotland	17	8
Wales	15	3

The table shows the number of DPs that are focusing exclusively on specific single regions/devolved administrations. Certain regions and areas emerge as more likely to have DPs operating exclusively within them, for a variety of reasons:

- Devolved administration and separate application process (Scotland)
- Geographically and regionally-specific issues being faced (South West)
- Region has a large concentration of population (London and North West).

#### 2.6.3 *Partnership mapping*

There are significant differences in the number of partners involved from DP to DP. Among the case study DPs, the size ranges **from 4 to just under 40 partners**. Overall, a third of the case study DPs have from 6 to 10 partners, and a further third have 11 to 15 partners.

The table below provides a breakdown of the types of partner organisations involved in the EQUAL DPs, shown as lead and other partners. As the table shows, the programme has been successful in drawing together a diverse range of organisations, particularly into the lead partner role.

There are inevitable limitations on who can fulfil this role which relate to the scale and complexity of the programme. These organisational requirements have been increasingly shown as the programme has progressed.

## Types of DP partner – All DPs

Type of organisation	Number (and %) of lead partners	Number (and %) of all partners
Local authority	20 (26%)	128 (16%)
Voluntary/community	14 (18%)	209 (26%)
Private Sector	8 (11%)	99 (12%)
Further Education	6 (8%)	82 (10%)
Higher education	6 (8%)	61 (7%)
Business support agencies	6 (8%)	39 (5%)
Regional Development Agency	3 (4%)	13 (2%)
Learning and Skills Council	3 (4%)	25 (3%)
Careers Service	2 (3%)	19 (2%)
Other <sup>5</sup>	8 (11%)	137 (17%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>76 (100%)</b>	<b>812 (100%)</b>

There has been some degree of change in partner composition in nearly all cases. Subsequent chapters look at how the partnerships were formed and how they have evolved over the course of Actions 1 and 2.

## 2.7 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is divided into three parts as follows:

- **Part 2: Programme and Process Issues** – with chapters on the application phase; Action 1; Action 2; Action 3; and monitoring, evaluation, support and guidance.
- **Part 3: The Principles of EQUAL** – with chapters covering the principles partnership; innovation; empowerment; transnationality; mainstreaming; and equal opportunities.
- **Part 4: Study Recommendations** – featuring the recommendations resulting from the study.

The report also has four Annexes:

- Annex 1 provides a more detailed description of the evaluation methodology.
- Annex 2 describes the process by which the 30 DP case studies were identified.
- Annex 3 includes the interview schedules used in the final evaluation fieldwork.

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<sup>5</sup> Other, includes a range of organisations such as Government Departments, employer representative organisations, TUC, the Prison Service and the Refugee Council.

- Annex 4 outlines the programme level monitoring information that has been gathered to date.

## **Part 2: Programme and Process Issues**

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The following chapters assess EQUAL in terms of the structure of the programme. They look in turn at:

- The application phase
- Action 1 – the development phase
- Action 2 – the implementation phase
- Action 3 – the mainstreaming and dissemination phase
- Monitoring, evaluation, support and guidance.

### 3 THE APPLICATION PHASE

#### Key Findings:

- Overall awareness of the programme was high, through a combination of promotional activities and knowledge in advance of the first call for bids.
- Involvement of policy stakeholders at the programme development and application phases helps to provide 'buy-in' and to maximise the policy relevance of the selected DPs – which has increased mainstreaming potential.
- The selection process followed was found to be transparent and impartial. Transparency in the selection process and criteria used is particularly important in the light of policy involvement in DP selection. Some of the organisations involved in selecting DPs, as the key target audience, were lead or major partners on DP bids.

#### 3.1 Initial Awareness of the Programme

The EQUAL programme in GB was launched in March 2001. A variety of means were used to publicise the programme to potential applicants. The 2001 Implementation Report<sup>6</sup> notes that as well as a national launch there were:

- Regional events
- Support Unit presentations at events held by relevant organisations
- A website
- A mailing list.

Stage 1 of this evaluation found that there was no single piece of publicity or advertising that the case study DPs could recall. Rather, many gave the impression that they knew of the impending programme far in advance of the call for bids – and that knowledge stemmed from involvement in other ESF programmes, notably ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT.

Also, many of the lead partners are local government, voluntary sector or educational institutions which have dedicated ESF staff whose role is to gather intelligence on funding opportunities through programmes such as EQUAL.

**It is important to distinguish between an organisation corporately being aware of EQUAL and those individuals who lead and develop the bid becoming aware of it.** In many cases, it is the awareness of the latter that is

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<sup>6</sup> ESF 2000-2006 EQUAL CIP for Great Britain and Gibraltar: Annual Implementation Report 2001 (June, 2002)

more important for a bid being taken forward. Where there is weak internal communication within an organisation, the prospect is raised of key actors hearing about the programme second hand or not at all. One example of this is two case study DPs first hearing about EQUAL through transnational contacts rather than through the individuals initially contacted within their organisations.

### **3.1.1 Areas where further awareness may be required**

Although EQUAL has been widely publicised at an organisational level, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether there were any types of organisation which were less likely to become aware of the programme. Here, evidence is largely anecdotal, but a number of the unsuccessful bidders we spoke to noted areas of potential interest, namely the **disability and health communities**, which seemed under-represented in all parts of the application phase.

The Scottish Management Committee raised concerns about the extent to which **rural areas and issues** had been targeted under the first round of EQUAL, and that they would be keen to encourage more activity in rural areas in the second round.

### **3.1.2 Key factors for taking an EQUAL bid forward**

The case study DPs offered a range of key reasons in their decision to develop initial bids, related to their own priorities and situation. They can be categorised as follows:

- A perfect fit with partners' mainstream activities/a mechanism for continuing work undertaken under previous initiatives.
- The individual within the lead organisation gaining support or some (financial) guarantee from their organisation.
- The in-principle agreement of a core of key partners.
- Specific attributes of the programme – namely its demonstration element and focus on innovation.
- The timing of the call for bids.
- Various budgetary drivers - a generic search and pursuit of funding opportunities; a review of the potential for obtaining match funding; the need to pursue funding in the context of uncertainty around funding streams (RDA single pot etc). Two case studies referred specifically to the end of SRB funding and EQUAL being a good opportunity to position partners in the regeneration market at a time of uncertainty.

## **3.2 Preparing Applications**

The partnerships were almost all initiated by the lead organisation on the basis of a pre-existing concept. The DP concept was then developed in each case along one of three models:

- ***By a core group of partners with wider group involvement*** – the wider involvement often being in terms of consultation or submission of ideas from other partners.
- ***By a single lead partner with varying degrees of input from other partners*** – typically, in the case of large lead partner organisations with considerable ESF experience.
- ***A consensually developed bid by all partners*** – not a common approach, owing partly to an obvious distinction between large (driver) organisations and small partners in most DPs, and a desire to progress swiftly towards the initial bid deadline.

The planned timescales for initial applications and bid development look to have been well-judged. The **vast majority of DPs thought that the timescale for putting initial applications together was adequate**. The larger DPs that struggled to meet the deadline did so as a result of the amount of time taken internally to agree to proceed with the bid.

### **3.2.1 Writing the bid**

Stage 1 of the evaluation showed that there were a variety of approaches to initial application preparation, with the **over half of case study DPs (17 out of 30) relying on one or two individuals within the lead partner organisation**:

- One or two individuals in the lead partner organisation (usually after some consultation with the other partners) – *(17 case study DPs)*
- External consultants (used because the partners lacked the time and resources do it themselves) – *(5 case study DPs)*
- An in-house bid writer not later involved in the programme – *(4 case study DPs)*
- A combination of inputs by different partners (either independently or collaboratively) – *(4 case study DPs)*

In two examples most of the initial application was written by the lead partner, but specific parts (empowerment and equal opportunities in one case; empowerment and innovation in another) were prepared by other specialists within the partnership.

### **3.2.2 Using external support**

As shown above, in some cases the bid was written for the partnership by external consultants. There were also a number of other examples where, although the bulk of the bid was handled internally, specific sections such as equal opportunities or empowerment were contracted out. This approach was taken for a variety of reasons, usually revolving around available resources and the degree of internal expertise.

Using external support led to mixed results for the DPs. While in the majority of cases the role of external consultants appeared to be beneficial (committing already well-formulated ideas and activities to paper), in two cases their use had less positive results. Here the use of external bid-writers led to a lack of ownership over the bid/proposed actions among partner organisations. It is arguable, also, that being externally written may have papered over some significant partnership weaknesses in some DPs.

### **3.3 The Bid Assessment Process**

There were 204 initial applications for funding under EQUAL, from which 77 DPs were approved for Action 1. Applications were made within one of the eight thematic fields being addressed in GB (i.e. all except Theme G).

Applications were made to the appropriate support unit:

- GB National Support Unit (ECOTEC)
- Wales Support Unit (WEFO)
- Scotland Support Unit (Objective 3 Partnership).

Applicants to the GB National administration were selected on the basis of a two-stage selection process:

- In the first stage bids were scored against a framework to determine eligibility. The scoring framework formed part of the guidance for prospective applicants.
- The second stage was the submission of the scored bids to the Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs) to recommend.

At this stage, the TNGs were composed of policy stakeholders identified and invited by the ESF Division/Support Unit to be involved in the programme. Here the expertise and depth of knowledge of the TNG representatives added value to the scoring process and allowed strategic judgements to be made in terms of policy relevance.

There were no unsuccessful bidders in Theme H, which gives an indication of the volume and quality of bids. Three DPs in other pillars were asked after their initial applications to move Theme, to ensure best use of resources allocated in the CIP. In two cases this meant a move between pillars. This was an early indication of the degree of cross-thematic overlap.

#### **3.3.1 Reflections on the selection process**

From stage 1 of the evaluation it seems that the process by which bids were scored and selected was impartial and in line with pre-defined priorities (as set out in the CIP). The successful bidders thought their applications had been judged fairly, and a significant proportion of the unsuccessful bidders felt that

the reasons given for their rejection were valid (typically, that it lacked detail or failed to emphasise the link with the relevant EQUAL pillar).

Applicants were aware that the review bodies included representatives from organisations which were bidding within that theme. This is a real strength of the programme, as it shows that leading policy stakeholders have been involved both in guiding and delivering EQUAL. **But in this context it shows the importance of maintaining both perceived and actual fairness in selection.**

A perceived lack of prescription was the abiding memory of some applicants, with a light touch approach being noted and appreciated by DPs. Approval was given along with straightforward guidance on the issues the managing authority wanted the DP to look at in Action 1.

### **3.3.2 Policy involvement**

One of the strengths of the programme for key stakeholders has been their ability to **shape the design** of EQUAL (in terms of the focus of Themes etc) from the start and during the application phase. There is evidence that this process helps increase the relevance of the EQUAL themes for policy – which should in turn make the process of ‘selling’ the EQUAL policy findings easier.

For example, the EOC saw in the shaping of Theme H’s focus on desegregation a strong match with its own agenda and corporate plan. This has in turn impacted on the EOC’s level of involvement in the programme (with the DPs and at TNG level). The Adult Basic Skills Unit within DfES has taken a strong lead in Theme E, as has the DTI/SBS in the Entrepreneurship Themes.

### **3.3.3 Bid development in Scotland and Wales**

The bid development and application process in Wales mirrored the GB National approach. The same initial guidance as for the GB National programme was used, but applicants planning to focus primarily within Wales were asked to apply to WEFO rather than the GB Support Unit. Out of 13 applications in Wales, three were approved by the Wales EQUAL Management Committee (a subset of the GB Monitoring Committee). The main issue for the unsuccessful applicants was an apparent failure to appreciate the centrality of the equal opportunities dimension of EQUAL.

In Scotland, specifically, a different approach was taken to the bidding process. The aim was to develop single DPs for each theme through a collaborative process. For most of the DPs in Scotland this meant a broadening of their partnerships and in some cases working with ‘new’ partners. In a sense, this also widens access to the programme for organisations which may otherwise have been unlikely to submit a successful application. However, the artificiality of the partnerships has made them less stable, although the approach did force partners to work together that had not done so before.

For Scotland and Wales, there is not just a smaller number of DPs but the smaller size of the main policy body (i.e. Scottish Parliament/Executive and Welsh Assembly). In fact, Scotland seems to have chosen to encourage a smaller number of DPs partly in order to align more closely with its actual and emerging policy responsibilities (and policy departments within the Scottish Executive) – something which has implications for the mainstreaming process and offers the potential for the process to take place more effectively (see Part 3 of this report). There is also an individual at the Scottish Executive whose role includes linking each DP with relevant policy officers and ensuring information flows between the two.

#### **3.3.4 Equal Opportunities - Gateway Questions**

The two equal opportunities questions on the initial application form were treated as gateway questions. If applicants did not answer these questions satisfactorily then their bid was unsuccessful. This **approach puts equal opportunities at the core of the programme**, reflecting its status as an underlying principle of EQUAL. Indeed, an early success of the EQUAL programme has been the adoption of the 'gateway' approach to equal opportunities in the GB Objective 3 programme.

The questions on the EQUAL application form related to prospective DPs having an equal opportunities policy. Equal opportunities was an area where DPs tended to have to undertake further work during Action 1 and in the early stages of Action 2 – particularly in terms of developing a strategy for implementing their equal opportunities policy.

Having equal opportunities as a gateway question does not therefore mean that applicants arrived with fully-formed strategies, but ensures that each DP had a framework or basic approach on which to build. It also firmly sets the expectation that equal opportunities is an important area of focus.

#### **3.4 Evidence of Added Value**

There was evidence from the stage 1 contacts that most DPs would have continued with at least some of their proposed activities had their EQUAL bid been unsuccessful. The significant marker of the overall **added value** from EQUAL lies in the aspects that partnerships said they would not have been able to otherwise undertake. The two most common areas that DPs say they would have reduced or not undertaken were:

- Research
- Consultation (what many DPs see as being their empowerment angle).

An interesting point made by a number of DPs was that they may well have continued with the activities, but on a much smaller scale, perhaps regionally or locally rather than nationally. This suggests that EQUAL has added value in enabling more ambitious partnerships to be formed.

The unsuccessful bidders contacted during stage 1 of the evaluation provided further insights in this regard. Of the 12 unsuccessful applicants contacted:

- Four did not continue with their planned activities in any form.
- Three continued with some of the activities (in one case the full set of activities continued but on a much smaller scale), primarily through Objective 3 funding.
- Five continued with the bulk of their activities, via a range of funding streams (eg Home Office; New Deal for Communities; local authorities and NHS Trusts).

## 4 ACTION 1 – THE DEVELOPMENT PHASE

### Key Findings:

- Action 1 was a crucial period for DPs in developing their partnerships. Although this partnership building is fairly intangible, its importance to EQUAL should not be underestimated.
- However, it is difficult to see practical activity during Action 1 in a lot of cases. Only 6 out of the 30 case study DPs undertook initial research / preparatory work with disadvantaged groups during Action 1.
- The process of finding transnational partners and putting the TCA together was relatively straightforward. The ECDB was a useful tool in this process for many.

### 4.1 Role of Action 1

Action 1 is a six-month long period in which the successful bidders could further refine and develop their initial plans and build their partnerships. This process culminates in the production of a detailed work plan, which is part of the Development Partnership Agreement (DPA).

Transnational working is a key requirement of the programme. Action 1 is also the period in which the GB DPs formed partnerships with one or more DPs from other Member States, agreeing a series of joint or parallel activities. This is formalised in the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA).

The inclusion of this **period during which DPs could refine and reformulate their initial plans and shore up/build their partnerships was one of the most positively viewed parts of the EQUAL programme** by the case study DPs. Somewhat paradoxically, however, on a superficial level it does not seem as if much 'hard' activity was undertaken by partnerships during Action 1. In some cases, it was difficult for DPs to identify anything they had done during this phase beyond repackaging their initial bids into the DPA. **Overall, 75% of all the then 77 DPs said they did not undergo major changes in planned activities during Action 1.**

### 4.2 Key activities undertaken during Action 1

DP activity concentrated on three main activities during Action 1:

- Partnership development and establishing systems for operation.
- Development of an equal opportunities policy and strategy.
- Formation of transnational partnership and production of the TCA.
- Production of the DPA.

Our initial contacts with the then 77 DPs during stage 1 of the evaluation found that **just over two-thirds (68%) had experienced changes in partnership membership during Action 1**. In most cases, this amounted to smaller partners coming on board or dropping out, although in others it was quite a large-scale exercise (eg a DP growing from 10 to 23 partners).

Beyond changes to partnership, most DPs spent the time firming up the partnerships they had put together, mainly through a series of meetings to:

- Devise the operational structures
- Agree the roles of specific organisations.

With the larger partnerships, **a balance seems to have been sought between involving all partners during Action 1 through face-to-face meetings and workshops, and the recognition that this level of input was not always appropriate or relevant for some partners**. What may be lost in terms of inclusion and democracy by following a core partnership group approach is made up for in terms of efficiency in programme development and, arguably, maintaining wider partnership interest by not involving 'smaller' partners in irrelevant meetings.

Beyond the core activities, other activities undertaken during Action 1 included:

- Preparation and early research – the identification of pilot areas; research briefs; and baseline reviews of pilot sectors.
- Refining plans - internal consultation and discussion about what Action 2 would involve.
- Strengthening the equal opportunities element of the DP.
- Other administration and policy work – including the development of confidentiality agreements; partner action plans; publicity policies; draft financial policies, etc.
- Early recruitment of staff (although this more commonly took place at the start of Action 2).
- Resolving accommodation issues.
- Bringing in employers and SMEs to the partnership.

During the Action 1 period, the process of DPA preparation itself tended to raise previously unforeseen issues for the DPs (e.g. difficulties producing match funding certificates, complications when trying to translate initial ideas into a more systematic work plan). The development phase therefore acted as an important buffer to take these issues on board and refocus the work plan as necessary.

#### 4.2.1 **Undertaking research**

Only six of the 30 case study DPs undertook original research in support of their programme during Action 1. This took the form of local survey work or workshops/focus groups with beneficiaries to feed into the DPs' empowerment strategies.

In one sense, the lack of research during Action 1 is a little surprising when it seems to have had such a role at the beginning of Action 2 (as shown by the DP contacts in stage 2 of the evaluation). The arguments used by the majority of DPs included:

- There is a substantial body of existing research.
- Partners work on a day-to-day basis with the target groups and therefore already understand the issues.
- The budget for Action 1 would not stretch to it.
- The EQUAL work programme is building on existing work to the extent that there was no need for new research at this stage.

In the context of a programme with a strong emphasis on empowerment, however, it is clear that **more preparatory work and research with target groups could have been done during Action 1**. A recommendation would be to look at ways in which future DPs could be encouraged to involve target groups more closely during the development phase.

#### 4.3 **Producing the DPA**

Producing a technical document such as the DPA (and, for that matter, the initial application) within an ESF programme mitigates against close partnership working. The stage 1 contacts showed that from a practical standpoint, if for no other reason, responsibility for completing the DPA document often lay with a single partner much as with the initial application.

The technical language and extensive use of terminology was a challenge for some DPs in trying to engage their full partnerships. **Concepts such as innovation and empowerment were not always clear across the gamut of partners**. And with some DPs having as many as 30 partners there is the potential for some to feel even further removed from the agreement they are signing up to. Some DPs made specific efforts to combat these challenges:

- Producing guidance notes for partners in 'simple English' explaining some of the operating principles of EQUAL – **both conceptually and in terms of what it means for the specific DP**.
- One DP felt that the format and language of the DPA may not be accessible to all partners (and that some partners would be unlikely to read a document of its size) – and, as such, decided to produce a four-page summary of the document.

- Holding seminars for partners to discuss the principles of EQUAL and how to comply with specific application requirements.

These examples suggest that **however clear the generic programme documentation is, there is value in encouraging DPs to take steps to set the programme principles squarely in the context of their proposed activities.** This may include running sessions for partners and the production of supporting materials, ensuring that attention is paid to the quality control and appropriateness of any materials produced.

#### 4.4 Building Transnational Partnerships

Stage 1 of the evaluation showed that there were three main approaches to finding transnational partners, which were often used in tandem:

- Through previous contacts.
- Being contacted by a DP from another member state.
- By contacting DPs that were found on the ECDB database.

**The majority of case study DPs found the transnational element of the development phase relatively straightforward.** Both DPs with previous transnational experience and those without found the process of finding partners and developing the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) relatively problem free. Both sets of DPs considered that **the Action 1 period was invaluable in allowing scope for transnational partnerships to be established.** The ECDB database was also key in facilitating the transnational partnership development process, offering a rich resource for DPs to search for potential partners or check the details of those who had contacted them.

The partnership development process was not, however, without problems in all cases. The most obvious generic problem with cementing transnational partnerships – mentioned by most, if not all, DPs – was the **differential adherence to the EQUAL timetable across Member States.** In practice, this restricted the countries from which partnerships could be formed. Some people made reference to the fact that by the time DPs in one Member State had entered the database it was too late to consider using them. Related to this problem, some DPs found themselves inundated with requests to become partners – the bulk of which often came from particular Member States which had approved a large number of DPs.

The DPs selected transnational partners with the most relevance to their approach. This may be a DP undertaking a complementary set of activities, or even addressing the same question within a different national context.

##### 4.4.1 Writing the TCA

A common approach to writing the TCA was to hold a one- or two-day session for the nascent transnational partnership in order to agree a basic document.

Unsurprisingly, these meetings seem to have played a crucial role in partnership development.

Some DPs made reference to the fact that e-mail communication provided an effective medium for refining the TCA document, although a small number made reference to the difficulties associated with accessing the ECDB system. However, while the technology broadly supported transnational collaboration, it seems that in a lot of cases it was the responsibility of one partner to actually produce a TCA draft which others could then sign up to or amend (much like national partnership development).

#### **4.5 Managing the Transition of Programme Actions**

The skills required for developing an EQUAL bid are not necessarily the same as those required for managing the implementation of the work plan. Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation showed that a shift in key personnel either at the start of Action 1 or Action 2 was a DP characteristic – and one that was often planned.

Where the person in charge of putting the DPA together within the lead organisation was not the same person as the project manager charged with delivering Action 2 activities, there has been the strong potential for disjuncture in the aims and rationale for the project. It means different individuals or groups of individuals re-learning and re-interpreting the DPA. **The process of handover needs to be carefully managed in order to maintain understanding and ownership of the DPA.**

#### **4.6 Funding**

There was a strong emphasis from the case study DPs on the importance of having previous experience of applying for ESF funding. Only one of the case study DPs had no previous experience in this area. Even where the DP is being co-ordinated or managed by someone with little previous experience (in itself rare), that individual is operating within an organisation with the support structures and systems to handle complex funding issues.

This was raised during stage 1 of the evaluation as an issue related to the successful completion of the initial application and the DPA. It has become even more apparent during Action 2 in stages 2 and 3 of the evaluation.

Partners may also join DPs for reasons more related to accessing EQUAL funding than the spirit of the programme - which may lead to variable commitment in the later stages of the programme if their primary reasons for involvement are financial. This emphasises the **importance of having a development period during which the commitment of different partners, financial and otherwise, can be tested.**

There are examples of DPs which put in particularly large bids (£6 million in one case), which were significantly more than they received. The logic of

putting in a very large bid in the hope of receiving a significant proportion overall is problematic for a variety of reasons:

- It means that the workplan developed will be necessarily inaccurate.
- It makes it difficult for partners to plan activities.
- Where 'over-pitching the bid' is used to attract partners, the result is likely to be one of disharmony when expectations are not met.

These problems were mainly the result of DPs' failure to take adequate notice of the guidance. However, it is the DPs which must address the problems above.

The DP model itself also plays a part, as the focus of wider partnerships making more strategic interventions can encourage applicants to *'think big'* in every sense. For Round 2, as EQUAL is more established prospective bidders should have a better idea of the potential scale of activities.

#### **4.6.1 Sources of match funding**

A range of sources of match funding have been used by DPs, including LSC, RDA single pot, DTI, local authorities, SRB, neighbourhood renewal fund, Phoenix Fund and New Deal for Communities fund, as well as in-kind funding. The principle contributors of match funding for the highest number of DPs have been voluntary and community organisations and local authorities. **Well over half the case study DPs said they had not faced serious issues with regard to finding sources of Action 2 match funding.** At this point DPs were not on the whole considering Action 3 match funding.

The lack of serious issues generally faced by DPs in terms of Action 2 match funding does, however, mask some specific issues faced by the DPs:

- Difficulties obtaining 'clean' match funding from a full range of partners.
- Difficulties establishing the match funding contribution of private enterprises. When this contribution comes in the form of time spent by employees/managers who participate in the projects, the lead partner felt (rightly or wrongly) that it is not always appropriate to ask for salary levels and signatures on match funding certificates because the information is felt to be sensitive.

As the programme has progressed, it has also become clear that the larger the partnership, both in terms of budget and number of partners, the greater the financial risks. The scale of match funding required in some cases has been a challenge for lead partners to provide.

## 5 ACTION 2 – THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

### Key Findings:

- Partnerships have stabilised as Action 2 has progressed.
- There have been some delays in early implementation, mainly as a result of the time taken to sign final contracts. DPs are only willing to undertake ‘so much’ without formal agreements.
- Further into Action 2, progress against work plans is uneven across the DPs and within each DP.
- Around half of the case study DPs (14 out of 30) are broadly on course with their work plans.
- The vast majority of the case study DPs (28 out of 30) could provide evidence of some degree of substantive achievement or output to date.

This chapter looks at the implementation of DP activities under Action 2 from the second stage of the evaluation (roughly 6 months into the implementation phase) and the third stage (roughly one year into Action 2). It is possible to offer an analysis of implementation ‘to date’, although at the mid-term stage it is difficult to draw conclusions about impact. We also look at future expectations for DP activity under Action 2 in the light of progress made so far.

The stage 3 evaluation contacts showed that progress had been inconsistent across the planned activities **within** each DP. Some activities (notably relating to beneficiary involvement) had tended to remain in the planning stage, while the greatest advances (and most promising practice) emerged in places not necessarily anticipated in the original planning.

The DPs remained relatively stable, and most were confident about completing their activities broadly as planned.

The emerging model of DP development was one of continuing changes to partnerships over the first year of Action 2. In the early part of the implementation phase (stage 2 of the evaluation), **13 of the 30 case study DPs experienced changes** in their partnership membership. In next period (stage 3 of the evaluation), **15 of the case study DPs underwent changes**.

**Partnerships can therefore be said to have evolved over the course of the first year of Action 2 at least.** In stage 3 of the evaluation there was a slight prevalence of DPs gaining partners over those losing partners, whereas in stage 2 it was pretty evenly balanced between joiners and leavers.

## 5.1 Early Implementation

At the time of the stage 2 evaluation contacts, 22 of the 30 the case study DPs were behind schedule with their work plans, as set out in the DPA. The table below shows how the partnerships explained their delays, with a small number identifying multiple delays.

### Delays in Early Implementation – Case Study DPs Reporting Delays<sup>7</sup>

Reason for Delay	Number of DPs, (n=22)
Delays in receiving clearance for Action 2	18 DPs
Problems recruiting staff	6 DPs
Problems setting up partnership (meetings etc)	3 DPs
Delays undertaking initial/preparatory research	1 DP

The main reason for slippage in the early stages of implementation was the delay in receiving final approval for Action 2. From the stage 2 and 3 contacts it is clear that these delays provided a significant and general delay to implementation of three to six months.

A number of **partnerships seemed to be only willing to commit to a certain number/level of activities without the final contract being signed**. For various reasons, this agreement process lasted in some cases until the end of 2002 (the time of the stage 2 contacts). Some of the main issues were:

- Getting public match funded certificates from all partners before approval was granted.
- Some lead partners finding that the required level of financial detail was not easily obtainable from all partners.
- Quality of DPAs – with more budgetary detail being required (not just on minor costs, but in terms of major costs as well).
- Complexities of different cost structure regimes used in, for example, the Higher Education sector and Learning and Skills Councils.

## 5.2 Progress in 2003

These early delays were not a cause for concern for most of the case study DPs at the time of the stage 2 evaluation contacts. The vast majority of the DPs that were behind schedule (18 of 22 case study DPs) were confident of getting back on track in the early months of 2003.

This has proven to be slightly optimistic. However, by the time of the stage 3 contacts in mid-2003 **nearly half of the case study DPs (14 out of 30) were on course with their work plans**. This is encouraging, although it masks the

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<sup>7</sup> From the stage 2 evaluation contacts

fact that while a DP may be broadly on course with the majority of its main activities, specific tasks or pilots may be in danger of falling by the wayside.

Evidence from the non-case study DPs, also during stage 3 of the evaluation, suggests that relatively few (around 20% in total) were **entirely** on schedule. This partly reflects the large number of activities involved in each DP.

At the time of the stage 3 contacts, **just over half of the case study DPs (17 out of 30) were making uneven progress across their DP activities.** In a demonstration programme, it would be expected that some activities would be unsuccessful owing to their experimental nature. There are, however, other factors that have prevented even progress:

- Large partnerships with a disparate set of activities require a strong lead for each activity or pilot locally. Where this is lacking, a pilot may drift and strong DP management at the centre is required.
- Where different organisations have effective lead responsibility for different activities, there is the chance of a specific activity being delayed.
- Staff recruitment problems or turnover issues for specific delivery roles.
- Activities with a strong involvement or direct dependency on engaging hard-to-reach groups can be difficult to set up.

While the work plans as set out in the DPA tend to remain broadly similar, nearly half of the case study DPs have experienced some changes to activities or overall timescales. A small number of DPs have undergone larger-scale changes to their work plan (for example, the removal or introduction of a large-scale task or pilot involving more than one pilot).

#### **Degree of change to planned activities over Action 2 – Case Study DPs<sup>8</sup>**

<b>Extent to which DPA work plan remains current</b>	<b>Number of DPs, (n=30)</b>
Broadly similar	11 DPs
Some changes to activity or overall timescale	14 DPs
Larger-scale changes to work plan	5 DPs

By stage 3 of the evaluation, almost all of the case study DPs had either gone through (or were about to go through) the Significant Change procedure as they reached the end of the first year of Action 2.

### **5.3 Changes to National Partnerships in 2003**

Six months into 2003, at the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts, **most of the case study partnerships were relatively settled:**

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<sup>8</sup> From the stage 3 evaluation contacts

- Half of the case study DPs (15 out of 30) reported no change in DP membership in the period from the end of 2002 (at the time of the stage 2 contacts) to mid-2003 (at the time of the stage 3 contacts).
- A further five case study DPs reported new partners joining, but no organisations leaving the partnership.
- A small number of case study DPs (two out of 30) have lost partners in this period without introducing new partners.
- Around a quarter of the case study DPs (eight out of 30) have experienced a combination of new partners joining and existing partners leaving.

Following the pattern established in stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation, the changes in partnership do not tend to involve 'core' or main strategic partners.

Across the 3 stages of the evaluation, **the primary reason for partners dropping out is that the key individual contact within the organisation moves jobs**. There have also been examples of partners leaving to focus on delivery rather than a programme with a mainstreaming component.

### 5.3.1 *Changing lead partner*

During the early stages of Action 2, five DPs (representing 7% of the entire DP population) have changed lead partner across the programme. There are a variety of reasons for these changes, including:

- The organisation felt initially to be the most appropriate accountable body (on the basis of size) has, in practice, less day-to-day involvement in DP management than another partner.
- Administrative pressures (see below).
- Lead partner pulls out of the DP completely due to internal difficulties.

Generally, these changes have had quite a positive impact on the DPs concerned – with the new lead partners being well-placed to support the DP by being a policy stakeholder organisation (strengthening the mainstreaming potential) or a consortium of ethnic minority organisations (strengthening the empowerment aspect).

#### **Change in Lead Partner**

One DP was about to submit a Significant Change procedure that included changing the contracted 'lead' organisation to another member of the partnership. The change resulted from the scale of resources necessary to comply with the administrative requirements of the programme, which had not been expected. In restructuring the management of the DP, an interim management team has been appointed, and a new Project Director is being recruited with additional administrative support.

### 5.3.2 *Future changes to the national partnerships*

Looking forward, stage 3 of the evaluation found that **just under half of the case study DPs (13 out of 30) do not envisage further changes to their national partnership.** Concurrently, half (15) of the case study DPs do envisage further changes, typically in terms of new partners joining and tending to be smaller organisations relating to specific delivery-related activity (two DPs could not say whether they anticipated further changes).

### 5.4 **Changing Policy Environment and DP Scope**

In order to effectively mainstream, DPs need to be attuned to relevant policy developments. Just under a third of the case study DPs (9 out of 30) felt that the policy environment in which they were operating had changed since the start of Action 2 (at the point of the stage 3 evaluation contacts). A further three case study DPs could not say whether the policy environment had changed, and the remaining 18 DPs felt that the policy environment was broadly similar.

Over the course of Action 2 so far, the vast majority of case study DPs (29 out of 30) have retained the original scale/scope of activities as planned. There has been a degree of evolution for some single-region DPs that have over time started to include relevant groups (employers or a specific disadvantaged group) from a wider area.

There was also an example in the early part of Action 2 (from the stage 2 evaluation contacts) of a sub-regional pilot within one DP dropping out owing to a perceived lack of commitment to be replaced by a group of organisations in another region. **Replacing a pilot at this stage can have a positive overall effect on the DP.** The alternative approach – to persist with ineffective parts of the workplan – has not in the main paid off so far.

#### **Responding to Policy Needs**

One case study DP had by the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts decided to widen its scope beyond a single region. This could be partly seen as a response to the DP having a greater awareness of government policy on the sector it is focusing on – specifically, an interest in supporting higher value products in the industry. As a result, the DP also widened its sectoral and skills focus:

**1) Widening the sectoral focus:** A greater proportion of the industry is being addressed, because the DP is aware that employers in the part of the sector the DP was originally focusing on are increasingly moving into other parts of the sector and into other applications for their products.

**2) Shifting the Skills focus:** Reflecting the policy agenda and the changing needs of industry, the DP is also now focusing on advanced rather than basic skills. Again, this supports employment by focusing on higher value products.

**3) It is practicable to change scope:** The aims, content and basic means of delivery remain the same, partly because 80% of the industry is based in a small number of regions in the same part of the country.

## 5.5 Recruiting and Training Staff

There has been a wide range in the number of staff recruited by DPs up to and including the stage 3 evaluation contacts. This reflects the different types of organisation involved. A small number of case study DPs (four out of 30) are staffed entirely around pre-existing employees of partner organisations. Around half of the case study DPs have recruited one to three new staff members. Most of the rest have brought in from four to 10 staff members. DPs report it taking anything from two weeks to four months before new staff are 'job ready'.

The make up of DPs in terms of roles allocated can be summarised as follows:

- Project co-ordinators and managers
- Administrators
- Other staff to support local pilots (project managers for local pilots)
- Other staff to provide specialist skills centrally (e.g. on equal opportunities, finance etc).

As the programme has developed, it has been clear that **some DPs underestimated the number of staff required to manage their work programmes**. This is particularly true for the large partnerships and in relation to the administrative requirements. By the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts, some full-time project co-ordinators/managers estimated spending 50-80% of their time on project administration and monitoring.

### 5.5.1 Staff turnover

Just under **one third (9 out of 30) of the case study DPs reported experiencing staff turnover issues** (i.e. where staff recruited to run Action 2 activity had left) up to the point of the stage 3 contacts. This means that the majority of DPs have been stable, albeit over a relatively short period of time.

The main issues relating to staff turnover have been:

- Structural problems - staff being trained and poached by organisations that could offer longer term contracts. This is an inevitable problem with this sort of ESF programme, but it is one that some DPs have magnified by delaying the identification and recruitment of staff until well into Action 2.
- General labour market pressures – particularly for DPs in London and the South East.

- Inappropriate candidates recruited – not a major problem, but seemingly the result of DPs under-estimating the skills or experience to manage the administrative requirements of the programme.

## **5.6 DP Outputs and Achievements**

The DP outputs and achievements during Action 2, up to the stage 3 evaluation contacts, could be broadly categorised in the followed way:

- Setting up infrastructure and awareness raising
- Developing research, tools and frameworks
- Delivering services – advice, training programmes etc.

Only two out of the 30 case study DPs could not provide evidence of substantive outputs for the DP as a whole since the start of Action 2. There were also some DPs which are progressing, but which have achieved less than may have been expected for the scale of their activities. Although it is too early in the programme to reach firm conclusions, it does seem that the smaller/more localised DPs have been able to mobilise more rapidly and so be able to achieve outputs earlier in the programme.

It is important to note that at this stage in a demonstration programme such as EQUAL, those DPs which cannot yet evidence impact are not failing DPs.

### **5.6.1 *Infrastructure and awareness raising***

An early activity for DPs has been to develop the systems and infrastructure to manage their activities. DPs have also undertaken important work setting up forums locally to support implementation. There are examples of community forums and, most typically, of forums to engage with employers.

Another generic activity for DPs is holding conferences and events. At this stage they focus on awareness raising, but for national DPs in particular holding a series of regional conferences is an effective way of drawing all the strands (pilots) of the DP together.

There have been some larger scale events. For example, within the entrepreneurship themes, DPs were involved in setting up an EU-wide conference at the DTI in London.

### **5.6.2 *Early research and tools***

A lot of early DP activity centred around preparatory research, used to guide and shape further activities and as a way of ensuring the target group focus. This can take a variety of forms, and the following examples have emerged:

- Skills audit – which has led to the development of a tool (a skills assessment questionnaire for the target group), felt by several partners

to be empowering because it offers a rare opportunity for the target group to say positive things about themselves.

- Empowerment toolkit – still in the evaluation phase with partners, this is based around research into issues such as stereotyping, cultural issues and trends, demographics and role models.
- Developing a pilot model for measuring soft outcomes/distance travelled.
- Papers, booklets and reports – including codes of practice (for employers); research papers written by disadvantaged groups.
- ICT-based tools – including an on-line orientation resource for asylum seekers, which has been completed and is being piloted.

At this stage many outputs are in a development stage. Initial versions have been produced, but are currently being ‘road-tested’ by partners or with target groups. For each DP, a series of tools may together form a suite of materials. For example, a Theme E DP has produced a quality framework, an accredited learning programme, an auditing tool for employers, and a paper on learning infrastructure. Taken together, these are a set of tangible tools which could be given to anyone wanting to run this type of learning in a given context.

### **5.6.3 Providing services and running pilots**

The DPs are generally quite advanced in terms of providing services to disadvantaged groups (particularly considering the delayed start to Action 2). This ranges from groups involved in pilots to those who have been supported into positive outcomes. The scale is in the region of 10 to 25 individuals passing through ‘DP services’ for each delivery partner or pilot activity.

This gives a sense of the number of individuals passing through each DP to date, some 250-300 depending the size of the DP and the number of activities they are undertaking. Most are considerably smaller than this.

Those DPs that are targeting quite specific groups may be able to engage sufficient numbers – but the challenge is to engage the ‘hardest-to-reach’ as identified in the work plan.

#### **Concentrating resources and efforts on the hardest-to-reach groups**

One DP has a partner which is targeting the setting up of 14 businesses run by women and six businesses run by men, focusing on a specific ethnic group. So far it has attracted 10-15 beneficiaries, of whom only two are women. Reflecting on its early activity, the attention is now focusing on women from the ethnic group who do not consider themselves as entrepreneurs. The DP has employed a female outreach worker to directly engage with the community, and promoted their work through radio programmes in a variety of languages.

A key success factor in the provision of new services and pilots is the engagement of a wide range of groups:

- Community and voluntary groups – to support the ‘supply’ of beneficiaries and to signpost them to the DP.
- Employers – in some cases to run pilots.
- Statutory agencies – in a small number of cases, to directly pilot DP initiatives (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, Business Link).

The Action 1 Development Phase has been key for forming these links. Community and voluntary groups have generally been engaged as partners. Those DPs that are running activities in the workplace or with employers (particularly in Themes A and E) have had success in directly engaging employers to run pilots by:

- Providing a strong business rationale to the employers
- Using existing networks of employers.

## 5.7 Early Impact

An indication of impact so far is shown by the **wider adoption** of DP models and tools by a wider constituency. This is in itself an important step toward mainstreaming, and examples of successes are already emerging:

- One DP has done work influencing approaches to equal opportunities in its sub-region – e.g. they have produced an easy to understand booklet for beneficiaries relating to their equal opportunity rights. It has proved successful, and this and other practice will be transferred e.g. to an existing partnership of local authorities in the sub-region.
- A DP has found widespread interest in adopting its model of workplace co-ordinators to provide professional and personal support to new employees from disadvantaged groups in a sector. Other employers in the region and in other areas have shown an interest in replicating the model, to help retain employees (a serious problem in the industry).
- It is also shown in those DPs which have had an impact which is likely to be **sustained** – for example, a DP that has set up a course that has now been accredited and will run beyond the life of the programme.

### 5.7.1 Impacts on ‘beneficiaries’

As part of stage 3 of the evaluation, the case study DPs were asked to identify the main ‘beneficiaries’ from their activities undertaken so far. The nature of the beneficiaries proposed by the DPs gives an indication of the range of groups they had engaged with, and impacted on, over the first year of Action 2.

The term ‘beneficiary’ is used in a broader sense than in traditional ESF programmes. It has a range of practical definitions in the EQUAL context, and includes more traditional beneficiary groups in the testing of new products and services developed. Potential ‘beneficiaries’ include:

- Recipients of newly developed services or products – in their final or pilot stages.
- Recipients of information – either as research findings, initial findings or lessons and ‘policy messages’ passed to the relevant policy audiences.
- Individuals who have been ‘empowered’ through the operations and activities of the DP – for example, as a representative of wider beneficiary groups, as an individual in the management and direction of the DP, or individuals involved in survey work where their views informed DP activities.

In practice, **the vast majority of beneficiaries proposed by the DPs to date were from the first group - the recipients of newly developed services and products.** This group was particularly diverse and included individuals from disadvantaged groups (such as asylum seekers, offenders, BME entrepreneurs, and people with disabilities) and organisations (including large employers, SMEs, social care and careers organisations). Most had received a **range of services** from the DPs and there was evidence of individuals achieving a range of **positive outcomes** – which at this stage appear sustainable. While many of the products provided are at the less innovative end of the scale, they are an indication that real progress is being made and tangible outputs produced.

**A small number of DPs proposed recipients of policy messages as beneficiaries** – not surprising given the stage of the programme. The fact that some DPs were able to identify early lessons, and communicate them to identified policy makers, is in itself a positive finding for future dissemination and mainstreaming potential. The topic of mainstreaming, and DPs’ broader experiences in this area to date, are described in the following chapter and in Chapter 12 of this report.

**Only one or two DPs proposed individuals who had been empowered through the DP’s operations** as initial beneficiaries. The issue of DPs and the principle of empowerment is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

## 5.8 Expectations of Future Progress and Impact

At the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts, the vast majority of the case study DPs were confident about completing their Action 2 activities fully, in time and to budget. Asked to rate their confidence on a 1-5 scale where 1 = ‘very confident’ and 5 = ‘very unsure’, the following responses were received:

- 1 = 11 DPs
- 2 = 13 DPs
- 3 = 5 DPs
- 4,5 = 0 DPs

- Unable to say = 1 DP.

However, the majority of DPs are unable to provide a clear sense of whether their work would continue beyond the life of the existing DP. This reflects the fact that it is still quite early in Action 2 and that the EQUAL funding has been allocated for a discrete set of activities.

However, **almost half of the case study DPs (13 out of 30) are planning to sustain at least part of their partnerships.**

**Plans for sustaining the EQUAL partnerships/activities – case study DPs<sup>9</sup>**

Plans for sustainability of partnerships	Number of DPs (n=30)
No plans to sustain any parts of the DP	4 DPs
No plans as yet / not yet considered	7 DPs
Plans to sustain only some parts of the EQUAL partnership/activity	13 DPs
Plans to sustain all parts of the EQUAL partnership/activity	4 DPs
Main plan for sustainability is through Round 2 EQUAL funding	2 DPs

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<sup>9</sup> At the time of the Stage 3 evaluation contacts

## 6 ACTION 3 – MAINSTREAMING

### Key Findings:

- The devolved administrations have a more open-ended timescale for Action 3 applications, while the GB National administration has imposed an earlier deadline.
- The GB-National approach has ensured that mainstreaming is considered in conjunction with implementation and delivery. All but three of the DPs have made an Action 3 application.
- DPs have not generally been able to undertake combined Action 3 applications. However, they have been able to plan co-ordinated bids.
- The development of Thematic Mainstreaming Plans (which sits behind the Action 3 process) has given greater focus to the work of the TNGs.

Action 3 represents 15% of the EQUAL budget. It runs in parallel with the implementation phase (ending six months after the completion of Action 2) and focuses on mainstreaming.

The Action 3 process is still at an early stage. This report coincides with the completion of the Action 3 planning stage in GB. There is also a different approach in the devolved administrations to the GB National approach.

Mainstreaming, as a principle of EQUAL, is also discussed in Part 3 of this report.

### 6.1 The Action 3 Process in GB

The Action 3 process in GB was launched in a series of seminars in November 2002. Each TNG, including its cohort of DPs, then developed a thematic mainstreaming plan over the early months of 2003 against which bids for Action 3 could be measured.

From the start of April, DPs started developing – either singularly or with other DPs – a Mainstreaming Partnership Agreement (MPA). The MPA is the Action 3 plan which outlines the networking, dissemination and mainstreaming objectives, activities and target audiences for the DP (or group of DPs).

A closing date of the end of May 2003 was given for Action 3 applications. Action 3 activity can begin from 15 August, 2003.

#### 6.1.1 *Developing Thematic Mainstreaming Strategies*

The Thematic Mainstreaming Strategies include a series of objectives framed around:

- Key policy/practice areas
- Key audiences
- Key dates for maximum impact
- What methodologies should be adopted
- Lead responsibility within the TNG and which DPs are involved.

The strategies show a close relation to the priorities outlined in the CIP, as well as reflecting subsequent policy developments (see box below). There are differences in terms of how specific Themes have framed specific policy areas and methodologies. Some do not effectively draw together the DP activity and are not yet specifically targeted. Yet overall they provide a good starting point for Action 3. The key issues and particular points of note in each Thematic Mainstreaming Strategy are presented in the box below.

### **Thematic Mainstreaming Strategies**

#### **Theme A**

- The strategy is based around the split identified in the CIP between actions to focus on specific geographical areas and those which do not (categorised as 'help for specific groups').
- It picks up the need identified in the CIP to link with the Social Exclusion Unit. There is also a strong focus on Jobcentre Plus and Connexions. In making these national links, the strategy is a basis for bridging the gap between the local/sub-regional focus of many of the DPs and national policy.
- The strategy includes one **joint activity** (around mechanisms for promotion), making the remainder effectively a combination of discrete DP priorities. Each priority includes up to 8 or 9 policy targets, meaning that the same targets appear a number of times and the strategy is not therefore geared to specific audiences.
- Common areas for focus are around good practices for developing sustained engagement with disadvantaged groups. There is a focus on measuring soft skills.

#### **Theme B**

- The strategy has **four clear objectives**, with policy audiences identified at various levels for each. It shows how combinations of DPs might address each area.
- There is a close relation to many of the main CIP priorities: using positive action, the promotion of the business case for diversity and increasing awareness of non-GB qualifications (with specific focus in the strategy on the NHS)
- It strays into the entrepreneurship pillar with the priority focusing on BME business creation.

#### **Theme C**

- The areas in the strategy directly relate to each CIP priority.
- It identifies not only the relevant DPs for each area, but the **relevant policy stakeholder from the TNG** (SBS/DTI) to lead.
- It is also particularly **specific and practical** in terms of the 'how question', moving beyond general methodologies (reports, awareness raising, informing policy makers etc).

#### **Theme D**

- The strategy strongly reflects the CIP priorities. It proposes **joint national activity** around the development of networks in all regions to be led by one DP, which will have specific funding to do this work.
- The strategy identifies not just the relevant DPs for each area, but which DP will lead.

- There is also a recognition within parts of the strategy of the **need to link with other EQUAL Themes**.

#### **Theme E**

- The main CIP priority on widening participation and attracting non-traditional learners is central to the strategy.

- The strategy addresses this through various **models**, including learner support, promoting learning, progression routes and basic skills. Each model links in with a number of DPs.

- The LSC is identified prominently within the CIP, but is only one of many target audiences in the strategy.

#### **Theme F**

-The strategy outlines a series of **cross-cutting themes** which directly reflect the priorities in the CIP (ICT solutions, work-life balance).

-It also outlines a series of specific areas relating to each DP. Many of these areas do not yet identify a specific target audience.

#### **Theme H**

-There is a close relation to CIP priorities, particularly in terms of the focus on specific industries (ITEC) and working with employers.

- It also effectively identifies targets at a wide range of levels.

- Parts of the strategy are particularly strong in terms of identifying **key dates** to achieve maximum policy impact.

#### **Theme I**

-The strategy is very detailed, being comprised of a series of actions within 12 areas. These areas reflect the CIP focus on ESOL, advice, orientation and volunteering etc.

- The series of actions also encompass broad themes and the **EQUAL principles** - such as equal opportunities, empowerment, transnational working and influencing public opinion.

-For each policy area, the strategy identifies the **networks** (within and outside of EQUAL) that are necessary for success.

## **6.2 Combined and Co-ordinated Approaches to Action 3**

Stage 3 of the evaluation mirrored the period over which DPs were developing their initial ideas for Action 3. Those DPs we spoke to in the early periods of stage 3 were far more likely to say that they were not planning to make an Action 3 application. Towards the end, all DPs said they were planning to make an application. This shows the extent to which the process encouraged DPs to develop new ideas over a short period of time.

Only one of the case study DPs was planning to undertake a combined Action 3 bid, which had been originally envisaged as a potential approach. This could have been an effective way to support co-ordinated mainstreaming, but there were administrative reasons to prevent it being a viable option. The requirement to have a lead partner organisation from one DP taking overall financial responsibility for Action 3 activity of other DPs provided too great a risk for a single organisation.

However, this has not prevented DPs from co-ordinating Action 3 plans through the TNGs:

- Within Theme A, a number of DPs (including two of the case study DPs) have submitted (or were in the process of submitting) co-ordinated Action 3 bids around awareness training for Jobcentre Plus staff.
- In Theme D, SBS has engaged a specialist individual to identify areas where joint TNG work could take the lead on engaging policy makers / mainstreaming.

The timing of this evaluation has meant that it has not been possible to assess the MPAs. The early indication is, however, that there has been a high level of engagement – with all but three DPs submitting plans.

### **6.3 Action 3 in the Devolved Administrations**

The main difference in approach between GB National and the devolved administration is that the latter are not imposing the same deadline on applications for Action 3.

In Scotland, a cross-thematic mainstreaming plan is being developed in similar format to the GB-wide plans, and implemented on a 'rolling programme' basis. The aim is to complete this by mid-2003.

In Wales, Action 3 has been opened up on a rolling basis until the end of the programme. WEFO are currently investigating options for match funding to be provided by the Welsh Assembly.

There was potential for confusion as national DPs with a presence in Scotland were tied to a deadline for Action 3 that similar organisations in the Scottish DPs are not. However, this point has since been clarified. The different approaches are ultimately a sensible reflection on the different policy communities in Scotland and Wales.

In Scotland and Wales there is more direct access to policy makers, although the challenge remains of engaging strategic policy makers where many of the DPs have an operational slant.

## 7 MONITORING, EVALUATION, SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

### Key Findings:

- Monitoring requirements are weighing heavy on all of the DPs. The need to support partners is resource-intensive for DP management teams in a way that was generally not initially appreciated.
- Three quarters of the case study DPs (22 out of 30) have now appointed an evaluator, and almost a third (nine out of 30) have produced an evaluation report.
- Three quarters of the case study DPs (22 out of 30) rated themselves as 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the support received.
- Having a named contact at the support unit who is familiar with the details of a particular DP acts as an effective bridge between the DPs and programme administration.
- The main areas where further support or guidance is required are around effective mainstreaming and compliance with monitoring requirements.

This Chapter looks at monitoring and evaluation at DP level, and the support and guidance provided to the DPs over the course of the programme so far.

### 7.1 Monitoring Requirements

The DPs are required to make interim claims on a regular basis. From April 2003, the ESF Division introduced a new monitoring tool for the GB wide DPs called the expenditure and revenue spreadsheet. This has highlighted some gaps in DP monitoring systems. The tool mirrors the information provided by DPs in Scotland since the start of the programme.

Monitoring is an area where DPs have generally faced a number of problems. It is the aspect of the programme which has taken up far more time than they originally planned or resourced for. It requires, as an minimum, a **dedicated post within the project team to manage monitoring** for many DPs.

Complying with the finance and monitoring requirements of the programme has required a cultural shift for some organisations (for example, producing timesheets outlining EQUAL and non-EQUAL activity).

A lot of time has been spent by DPs on ensuring that individual partners understand the ESF monitoring requirements. DPs have developed tools such as partner handbooks on finance/administration and template monitoring forms (in paper and electronic format) for partners. These are in addition to the general programme guidance.

### 7.1.1 *Approaches to monitoring*

One approach to ensuring that partners are not over-whelmed by administrative and monitoring requirements is for the lead partner to protect other partners as much as possible from this aspect of the programme. It is clear that **all DPs require a strong lead from the centre on monitoring**.

This means that a large responsibility falls on the lead partner, to keep partners up-to-date on requirements and to chase forms and public match funding certificates. Some of the DPs have arguably not put enough resources into ensuring that their internal systems can cope with the programme's monitoring and administrative requirements.

There is a strong emphasis, also, on the need to provide **on-going support** for partners on this issue, for example:

- Simplifying forms for partners to include only essential information, to be easily completed (e.g. by tick box).
- One DP management team has six-weekly monitoring visits to partners.
- Ensuring each DP partner has a named contact with responsibility for administration and compliance with monitoring requirements.
- Monitoring is also being increasingly incorporated as a set agenda item for partnership meetings.
- At least one DP has hired an external company to provide advice to partners on ESF record-keeping requirements.

A challenge for DPs is to be able to effectively monitor and capture innovation within their partnerships. This is difficult not only because of the number of partners and activities involved in most cases, but also because it requires DPs to have a comprehensive understanding of all the ways in which they may be doing something 'new'. One of the case study DPs has an 'innovation log' in which its many partners can report new developments and innovations experienced locally.

Similarly, it is important that DPs describe mainstreaming impacts in their reporting – identifying 'who, what and how' so they can be followed up and verified.

### **DP using an On-line Project Management System to Support Monitoring**

- Encouraging use of ICT to enhance joint working. Monitoring returns must be submitted via on-line MIS, which encourages partners to use the system;

- Monitoring usage – project manager tracks which partners log on and for what purpose. Partners are aware of this – which promotes use of the system. Additionally, provides a channel through which to open up dialogue about system usage.

- MIS content – workplan – actions planned, undertaken, achievements. Working group agendas, minutes, supporting documentation. Message board and discussion groups.

The system has initiated changes in DP working practice. One partner used the message board to initiate a discussion on the content and structure of management committee meetings - feeling that meetings were too operational. Result – meetings were restructured to reflect comments. There are now two sessions in each meeting: one covering DP operational issues, the other covering wider thematic issues delivered through workshops, presentations by external speakers.

#### **7.1.2 Beneficiary monitoring information**

There is a degree of mismatch between the aims and objectives of the programme (as a demonstration programme focusing on hard-to-reach groups) and its key monitoring requirements (in terms of beneficiary information). Some of the monitoring requirements are not relevant in specific themes (e.g. length of unemployment for asylum seekers - who are ineligible to work).

A major point is the sensitivity of particularly hard-to-reach groups to completing forms and providing the required information (eg national insurance number, fixed address). While the requirement is important for the purposes of transparency and accountability, it will have the spin-off effect of being a barrier to entry for some individuals and groups. While recognising that GB is bound by European Commission requirements, any means of making the information more relevant would be productive.

It has clearly been a time-consuming process for DPs to develop effective systems for capturing beneficiary information, and to put those systems into practice. The example below shows how a DP is being creative in collecting beneficiary information.

#### **Beneficiary Monitoring in practice**

##### **A 'passport' for beneficiaries**

One DP has developed a 'passport' for beneficiaries. This is a booklet given to beneficiaries to record the events, courses and work experience that they have participated in through the DP. The innovative nature of the booklet derives from the fact that it is kept by and follows the beneficiary, and that it can work as a tracking document as well as a means of promoting beneficiaries' sense of achievement. Whereas usually course/tracking data are kept at the learning provider or course

organiser, with the beneficiary only getting the certificate of achievement at the end, the passport can be shown by the beneficiary whenever he/she needs to. Thus, throughout a beneficiary's progression towards employment he/she can show a new training provider or support organisation what activities he/she has undertaken and what has been achieved so far.

## 7.2 Evaluation

The DPs have made significant progress with their evaluation plans since the start of Action 2. When asked in the period immediately after DPA submission, only one third (36%) of DPs claimed to have developed an evaluation strategy across the programme as a whole. Among the majority which had not, it was clear that while the importance of evaluation was understood – it tended to take a back seat to other aspects of DP development.

In some cases there was also a lack of clarity amongst the DPs as to the primary aims of their evaluations – a self-learning process for the DP or an accounting exercise for the benefit of an external audience (the ESF Division).

The table below shows that **three quarters of the case study DPs (22 out of 30) had appointed an evaluator by mid-2003**. Just under half of the case study DPs (13 out of 30) have actually started their full DP evaluations. Among the quarter that are yet to appoint an evaluator are DPs which unsuccessfully tendered at a first attempt.

### Progress with DP evaluation – case study DPs<sup>10</sup>

Status of DP evaluation	Number of DPs (n=30)
Yet to appoint evaluator	8 DPs
Evaluator appointed, methodology still being developed	5 DPs
Evaluator appointed, methodology agreed with partners, evaluation yet to begin	4 DPs
Evaluation started (only in DP 'spokes') – i.e. partners undertaking discrete evaluations	0 DPs
Overall ('hub') DP evaluation started	13 DPs

Significantly, almost a third (30%) of the case study DPs had produced an evaluation report by mid-2003. This enables partners to reflect on involvement and progress to date, as well as identifying gaps in the workplan.

One approach is to have a **shared evaluation** in which a partner assesses the meeting of objectives/programme principles, while an external organisation looks at the experiences of beneficiaries. The overall impact of the DP can then be assessed jointly. Others are using a **peer review** model in which partners act as 'critical friends' to evaluate each other's activities.

<sup>10</sup> At the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts

DPs are also using the evaluation process formatively to allow partners to have a structured input into the future direction of the DP. Evaluators are working with partners to ensure the 'DP ethos' is widely understood and to act as an independent adviser, fulfilling some of the following roles:

- Initial risk assessment for DP
- Reviewing the tendering process for the pilot delivery projects
- Facilitating key meetings (including transnational meetings), and providing informal independent advice.
- Visiting all partners to develop an evaluation framework but, in doing so, having an explicit role of capturing the learning at partner level and acting as an independent bridge between partners and the lead organisation.

A large proportion (73%) of the DPs across the programme initially said they were planning to measure soft outcomes/distance travelled as part of the evaluation. These measures have generally not been developed or used yet.

#### **An example of a four-phase DP evaluation approach**

##### **Phase 1 – Development**

Review of baseline socio-economic and contextual information; support for development of DP monitoring systems; meetings with transnational partners to establish timetable for evaluation and a framework for information gathering.

##### **Phase 2 – Development and Piloting**

Ongoing review of baseline socio-economic and contextual information; identification and prioritising of evaluation criteria in collaboration with stakeholders and beneficiaries (identification of soft indicators for evaluation in particular); outline design of interview and focus group frameworks.

##### **Phase 3 – First Stage Implementation**

Identification and prioritising of evaluation criteria in collaboration with stakeholders and beneficiaries and reaching agreement on interview and focus group frameworks; identification by stakeholders, beneficiaries and evaluators of appropriate reference groups on specific themes; initial interviews, focus groups and reference group meetings; initial analysis of interviews, focus group and reference group meeting data

##### **Phase 4 – Final Stage Implementation**

Completion of interviews, focus groups and reference group meetings; final analysis of all data gathered for the evaluation.

### **7.3 Support and Guidance**

The support available to the DPs takes a variety of forms:

- Direct contact with the relevant Support Unit.
- More detailed monitoring visits.
- Seminars and events - looking at topics such as Action 1 closure reports; monitoring & evaluation; planning for Action 3; applying for Action 3; and Action 2 update - monitoring and record keeping (good practice).
- Guidance materials.

## 7.4 Support Units

Overall satisfaction with the Support Units is high. **Around three quarters (73%) of the case study DPs rated themselves as ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the support received** in the stage 3 evaluation contacts.

### DP satisfaction with support received – case study DPs

Satisfaction with support received (1-5 scale)	Number of DPs (n=30)
1 – ‘very satisfied’	4 DPs
2 – ‘satisfied’	18 DPs
3 – ‘neither satisfied or unsatisfied’	6 DPs
4 – ‘unsatisfied’	1 DP
5 – ‘very unsatisfied’	0 DPs
Unable to answer	1 DPs

There were issues in the early stages of the programme relating to the extent to which questions could be answered, but DPs recognised that these were mainly a function of EQUAL being a new programme.

Each DP has a named contact at the GB support unit, which has been particularly productive. The DPs report that responses to queries are generally timely and, as the programme has progressed, they benefited from having a contact who is familiar with the detail of their DP. There has also been an important degree of flexibility in administering deadlines, with the support unit showing an understanding of the range of factors influencing DP progress.

There has been progress in the support units in the devolved administrations over the course of Action 2, particularly in Scotland. The main issue for these support units had been the extent of dedicated resources.

### 7.4.1 Requirements for additional support

Just under half of the case study DPs (13 out of 30) feel that they are at a stage where they do not require further support in any particular areas.

The main areas identified for further support by the others are around **mainstreaming and compliance with monitoring requirements** (each highlighted by 17% of the total case study DPs). In contrast other areas,

including empowerment and transnational working, were not identified by more than individual DPs.

#### **7.4.2 *Monitoring visits***

DPs reported finding the monitoring visits a useful opportunity to stand back and reflect on their work so far. There is no evidence that DPs are having difficulty relating to the differing support unit roles around the provision of support and guidance and its 'policing' role. Having a named contact provides DPs with a **clear demarcation of roles**.

#### **7.4.3 *Guidance materials and support tools***

The initial ESF guidance was inevitably large-scale and detailed. Those with experience of European funding found it useable, although the number of support unit queries on the DPAs showed the difficulties DPs had complying with all of the requirements when putting their DPAs together.

This guidance material has been crystal marked for clarity of language. Ongoing guidance has been provided through the website and at events to keep DPs up-to-date with programme developments.

The website is viewed positively, in terms of ease of use and as a source of documentation and information. It is not clear that the discussion forums have engaged the DPs as fully as they might, although the postings were widely read. This is in common with many similar discussion forums of this type, where interactive use is limited.

## **Part 3: The Principles of EQUAL**

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The EQUAL Community Initiative is based on core principles, which underpin the processes discussed in the first half of this report.

The following Chapters address the programme in terms of its these principles, namely:

### ***Partnership***

Addressing the issue of partnership formation and partner involvement in practice. The Chapter also looks at DP structure.

### ***Innovation***

Addressing where, at this stage, the innovative components of DP activity lie.

### ***Empowerment***

Looking at how the DPs are engaging disadvantaged groups.

### ***Transnationality***

Addressing progress to date with the transnational partnerships.

### ***Mainstreaming***

Addressed in terms of the links made with policy makers and the role of the TNGs.

### ***Equal opportunities***

Addressed in terms of DP equal opportunities policies and their strategies for implementing those policies.

## 8 PARTNERSHIP

### Key Findings:

- The main benefit of partnership working for the DPs to date has been the breadth and depth of knowledge and experience that it brings together.
- The partnerships themselves have been the principle source of innovation for EQUAL so far – being an opportunity for different combinations of organisation to work together in new ways.
- The DPs can be characterised as centralised or hub-and-spoke models. The latter tends to offer the largest potential impact, but also the greatest risk in terms of organisational complexity.

The analysis of programme and process issues shows how the principles of partnership have underpinned the development of EQUAL. The process of **partnership formation** sits at the beginning of the process, and it is also possible to look at **partner involvement** in the implementation phase.

It is clear that the effectiveness of EQUAL DPs will largely depend on the functionality of the **DP structures and organisation** that they put in place – and how DP activities and delivery models translate into particular modes of organisation (DP steering groups and sub-groups etc).

### 8.1.1 *Partnership formation*

Although there are obviously subtleties to each of the partnerships, it is possible to categorise the **case study DPs as being based on existing partnerships (16 out of 30) or effectively new partnerships (14 out of 30)**. While this is a fairly crude measure, it gives an indication that partnership building has been a significant activity for at least half of the EQUAL DPs.

In addition, the category of existing partnerships includes a significant number of DPs where the main core partners have worked together in the past, but there are some new organisations involved. Similarly many of the entirely new partnerships are based on previous bilateral working relationships – almost always involving the lead organisation. It seems to be the case, perhaps unsurprisingly, that in theme D there is a concentration of ‘new’ partnerships – bringing together as it does social enterprise and the third sector. In Scotland, the approach to the application phase meant that all the DPs were effectively new partnerships.

Overall, the **clearest site of innovation so far for the DPs has been in terms of the partnerships themselves. Getting organisations to formally work in combination for the first time has been the most commonly articulated ‘success’ so far.** While the approaches, activities and tools may

not be new, the fact that new perspectives are being employed is perceived as adding an innovative dimension.

This has been more true of those DPs that have had to build new partnerships than those that had strong previous experience of working together. The latter group were far more able to hit the ground running, but the experience for the former has been richer on the whole.

The early partnership successes and innovations have been expressed by the DPs in a variety of ways:

- *“The DPs brought together organisations from across sectors in the creative industries in a way not done before.”* Delivery Partner, Theme A DP.
- *“It is unique to have a combination of academics, skills organisations, private firms, business support organisations and trade unions involved in this kind of initiative in the textiles sector, and that this is an innovative aspect of the DP.”* Project Manager, Theme F DP
- *“Who would have heard of what (small voluntary organisation) were doing if they hadn’t been part of the DP?”* Programme Manager, Theme C DP
- *“It makes it easier for us to sell ‘promoting diversity’ if there’s such a wide range of organisations behind the project.”* Lead Partner Co-ordinator, Theme A DP
- *“There is a good skills mix with everyone in the partnership playing to their strengths.”* Project Co-ordinator, Theme E DP
- *“There’s been a change in mentality – individual partners are used to a funder-deliverer relationship, where they take the money and then get on with delivering, but in this case there’s been much more active involvement in shaping the project.”* Project Co-ordinator, Theme A DP

### **8.1.2 Partner Involvement**

As Action 2 has progressed, the **organisational complexity** of the DP model had implications for lead partners and DP project managers in terms of:

- Administration – ensuring compliance from each partner
- Maintaining the EQUAL principles at the forefront for all partners (for which there is potential for it being seen as ‘just another funding stream’)
- For larger DPs, ensuring that specific pilots or ‘spokes’ of the DP do not fall too far behind the DP overall as a result of any number of issues (local organisational difficulties, staffing etc).

The way in which EQUAL brings together large statutory organisations with smaller enterprises and voluntary organisations in partnership is a basis for

innovation. There are, however, emerging challenges, including the management of different organisations' systems, cultures and agendas and approaches for establishing shared operating arrangements and commitment. The degree to which DPs are experiencing these challenges varies according to the scope and size of each partnership. It was less of an issue in the early stages of the programme, but as the focus has shifted towards delivery – and more direct involvement for more partners – partnership management has become an increasingly resource-intensive activity. It is, however, the case, as noted earlier, that the partnerships have remained very solid into Action 2.

### 8.1.3 **Benefits of partnership working**

The case study DPs were asked to identify what they considered the main benefit of partnership work so far. Their answers are presented below:

#### **Main Benefits of Partnership Working – case study DPs<sup>11</sup>**

<b>Main benefit of partnership working</b>	<b>No. of DPs (n=30)</b>
Bringing breadth and depth of knowledge and experience	15 DPs
The quality of the DP and its products	5 DPs
Leading to unexpected synergies and added value	4 DPs
Leading to collaborative opportunities outside EQUAL	2 DPs
No benefits	4 DPs
<b>Total</b>	<b>30 DPs</b>

By far the clearest added value from the EQUAL partnership model – for the DPs themselves - is in terms of the breadth of knowledge and experience that results from having a range of organisations working together.

This can have very practical manifestations. It can, for example, overcome competition for resources between agencies which should be working together, and in doing so make the identification of real gaps in services more likely.

Those partnerships that had not seen benefits were either those that were particularly slow to develop or were ambitious in scope. As such, they may begin to see benefits later in the programme but are currently characterised by partners working in isolation.

#### **Building Partner Consensus**

A Theme A DP has developed a new partnership at sub-regional level for addressing employability issues. A key lesson from its activity was **to use Action 1 to ensure that there was genuine consensus about aims and methods**. This has led to a more constructive and consensual approach among a range of agencies across the sub-region which may have traditionally been in competition. Benefits include:

<sup>11</sup> At the point of the third stage evaluation contact

- valuable experience of working on a sub-regional level, which can be used in future programmes – which are likely to have more of a sub-regional than a local approach

- a new mentality among beneficiaries used to dealing with a number of agencies in the sub-region – which has encouraged them to look in wider geographical area for employment: *“it’s helped to break down the usual mentality about travel to work areas and its increased the kind of service that can be offered to people (beneficiaries)”* (Project Co-ordinator).

## 8.2 DP Structure and Organisation

In the early stages of Action 2, at the point of the stage 2 evaluation contacts, two distinct models of DP organisational structure emerged. This reflected the fact that the DPs are operating on differing scales (number of partners) and scope (sub-regional to national focus). They can be characterised as follows:

- **Centralised model** – where the steering group acts as the main driver, typically involving.....
  - A smaller number of organisations
  - More fluid sub-groups.
- **‘Hub and spoke’ model** – with a more devolved project- or site-based structure, typically involving.....
  - Wider scale/scope
  - Larger number of distinct components to the DP
  - Being centralised for management and decentralised for operational purposes
  - All partners come together less frequently.

Many DPs fall somewhere between these two extremes. In fact, as Action 2 has progressed there has been a **natural momentum towards a balance between the centralised and ‘hub and spoke’ models:**

- Some of the more centralised DPs have been seen to devolve greater control to a wider selection of partners.
- Others, which have developed around a number of pilots being run fairly independently by discrete partners, have focused on setting the infrastructure for greater communication between partners and a more integrated workplan.

In all cases, the DPs have increasingly become focused around specific activities and sites of delivery. The models do, however, remain distinctive.

There is also a clear need within each DP structure to balance the democratic partnership ethos with a system in which decision-making can take place

effectively. The lead partner has to be able to play a nuanced role, particularly within DPs with a large number of partners. Interestingly, only two DPs across the programme had established themselves as DPs Ltd, which is where a DP is set up as a company limited by guarantee. This model offers the potential benefits of a democratic approach, with a formal board and shared responsibility. However, there are challenges related to control and establishing authority without a single lead partner.

#### **The Hub and Spoke Model – Overcoming Difficulties**

One DP followed the hub and spoke model. Each partner was given a series of discrete tasks, which had progressed to varying extents at the time of the last visit. While there were a number of reasons for limited progress in some areas, the DP exemplified the importance of having arrangements in place to monitor partner delivery. In addition, an informal approach to delivery relationships was followed, with partners not receiving contracts until shortly before the last visit. Ensuring appropriate contractual relationships, with clear and agreed delivery plans with timebound milestones and outcomes, and monitoring procedures to check progress, are all key success factors for the hub and spoke model.

#### **8.2.1 Organisational Issues**

The role of the DP Steering Group also varies considerably. In some cases it is the clear driver for activity, while in other cases it meets less frequently and the DP is driven by sub-groups. The latter seems to offer the greater potential for empowerment, but at the risk to overall partnership cohesion.

The range in terms of Steering Group meeting frequency is from fortnightly to twice a year. Just under half of the case study DPs (12 out of 30) meet on a quarterly basis, while another five meet between six and nine times a year. Just over a quarter of the case study DPs (eight out of 30) meet quarterly or three times a year.

Those DPs that meet as a whole relatively infrequently tend to have sub-group meetings on a monthly or fortnightly basis. Overall, 21 out of the 30 case study DPs have steering or operational sub-groups that meet on *at least* a monthly basis. The vast majority of DPs (26 out of 30) report that all or nearly all partners attend these meetings.

#### **8.2.2 Communication**

As Action 2 has progressed, the increasing focus on delivery means that e-mail and telephone communication drives many aspects of DP work forward. With different groups of partners working on different activities, cross-DP communication systems become increasingly important.

The use of DP websites and newsletters are vital for maintaining regular contact. Some DPs are also using their evaluations to offer regular and systematic reflection from all partners.

**Providing partners with the information about mainstream policies and strategies to help them target mainstreaming efforts**

The lead partner produces a weekly newsletter that features wider strategic and policy changes and highlights the relevance of these to DP objectives and partners projects. It updates partners on DP progress, providing DP admin and management information and providing useful short and sharp analysis on changes in the wider policy arena of relevance to mainstreaming the DP's agenda. By using the newsletter as the main vehicle to disseminate information about partnership issues - the lead agency is encouraging partners to access and use the website and thereby exposing them to the wealth of information that they may find of use. This strategy is being reinforced by tracking website usage. Approach used is similar to 'soft policing' - partners are made aware that the website is being tracked and the lead agency occasionally comments on overall usage in the newsletter.

Comments from partners:

*'it's a manageable size and gives me a picture of other activities (undertaken within the DP) ... flags up and discusses policy initiatives that I would otherwise not have anyway of knowing about'*

*'it's pitched at the right level ... it's read by all the staff in the office.'*

## 9 INNOVATION

### Key Findings:

- There has been mainly process, rather than context or goal, innovation in the programme so far.
- The partnerships are clear sites of potential innovation in terms of practice (the concrete tools being developed) and wider strategic impact (the networks being developed).
- Most of the innovative aspects are still being piloted and tested.

### 9.1 Types of Innovation

For analytical purposes, three types of innovation can be conceptualised:

- Process-oriented innovation (e.g. new methods, content, approaches)
- Context-oriented innovation (e.g. new networks, frameworks for dissemination)
- Goal-oriented innovation (e.g. new approaches to working with target groups, new qualifications, opening up new areas of employment).

At this stage of the programme, it is only really possible to look at potential areas of innovation. The table below outlines the main source of innovation in each of the case study DPs so far (at stage 3 of the evaluation). In some cases, what has been achieved is a small part of what is planned to be a wider innovation, but as a work in progress the results are positive.

#### Main area of innovation within the case study DPs to date

DP	Main Focus for Innovation so far	Primary type of Innovation
<b>Theme A</b>		
1	Directly engaging beneficiaries in research. Providing beneficiaries with a platform to develop their own research proposals and control over resources – for more potent outcomes and policy recommendations.	Process & Goal
2	The size, scope and diversity of the partnership has brought together organisations across a sector to work together in a new way. Already seeing evidence of changing perceptions of mainstream organisations.	Context
3	An innovative type of work experience to meet employer needs, and a new tool enabling participants to evidence achievement.	Process
4	The employability focus with the target group is itself a new idea, particularly in terms of the provision of a co-ordinated service by	Goal

	the partners. There is also a strong empowerment lead from within the partner organisations.	
5	A multi-agency project team working and managed centrally. It has provided strong cross-fertilisation of ideas and engaged a government agency used to working isolation.	Context
6	The use of trained and accredited mentors with the specific target group (ex offenders) is new, but too early to judge impact.	Goal
7	Moving beyond the traditional funder-deliverer model to one where deliverers have a more active involvement in shaping the project and a consensual approach to decision-making. New services – refugee intermediate labour market activities.	Process
8	Outreach work with disadvantaged groups is taking place and has already had an impact. Also a strong employer focus.	Process
<b>Theme B</b>		
9	Main innovation is in the partnership itself – bringing together community sector, public authority and employer partners. There are early signs of innovations in specific projects – around areas such as process (targeting ethnic minorities in a collective way), tools (psychological toolkit) and building quality training.	Context & Process
10	The development of a model to create pathways into a particular industry. The way the partnership has undertaken this (through joint activities / the methods used) is also new to the context. In one local context, involving the community sector is a new dimension – previous links between education and industry.	Process
11	The partnership brings together policy makers (local authorities) and grass-roots organisations in development and delivery.	Context
12	Mentor training programme – materials and programme developed, piloted, and new trained mentors and beneficiary mentees. Success means more mentor training will take place. Innovative funding/franchising – initial events/development work has engaged BMEs and led to a new franchising programme.	Process
<b>Theme C</b>		
13	Delivered six-monthly entrepreneurship ‘apprenticeships’ by SMEs and micro businesses (partner organisations). Too early to judge effectiveness, but some impact (eg apprentices writing and broadcasting a radio drama).	Process
14	An ‘open approach’ in which the strategic partners are not prescriptive about the nature of delivery designed by the enterprise agencies. A distance learning package and a new business run by and for people with disabilities are new approaches in the local context.	Process
15	Filling gaps in provision (supporting the development of new ‘products’) and testing new techniques (to train the trainers)	Process
<b>Theme D</b>		
16	DP has undertaken facilitated workshop sessions to more clearly focus attention on innovation in designing and implementing the workplan. DP is implementing innovative processes in terms of work planning, task distribution, monitoring and evaluation.	Process

17	Main innovation so far has been in terms of forging links between partners and policy customers.	Context
18	Main innovation has been in bringing different sectors together to support social enterprise. Too early to assess impacts.	Context
<b>Theme E</b>		
19	The Action Research model is new, particularly in the workplace context. Action Researchers have also been active in designing their work and engaging with employees in their organisations.	Process & Goal
20	A flexible approach to engaging SMEs, addressing their key issues and using this a lever to address diversity issues.	Process & Context
21	Successfully making the business case for a model of intermediary support that meets employer needs and is delivered within an equal opportunities framework.	Process
22	In future, innovation is anticipated around the testing of a fundamentally new way of learning.	Process
23	Progress made in piloting a new way of learning that targets hard-to-reach groups.	Process
<b>Theme F</b>		
24	The development of genuinely new ICT-based tools and products for the target group. Strong target group involvement in development and piloting.	Process
25	Still in the early phase of implementation. Main area of future innovation is around supporting training materials through ICT.	Process
26	The combination of actors involved (academics, skills organisations, firms, support organisations, trade unions) is new in the sector.  Cluster-based approach to delivering training, enabling firms to combine and take a 'large company' approach, achieving economies of scale.	Context
<b>Theme H</b>		
27	Holistic approach to combating discrimination. Plan to have new modules/accredited learning within Modern Apprenticeships.	Process & Goal
28	Innovation remains to be shown, but DP is using new technology and new forms of support to challenge traditional job choices.	Process & Goal
<b>Theme I</b>		
29	Initial research highlighted that information provision on the Internet is focused on agencies dealing with asylum seekers not asylum seekers themselves. DP approach covers both groups.  A pilot work shadowing scheme is also considered innovative.	Process
30	The partnership has brought together agencies normally working in isolation. Expertise is being dispersed to new regions. Future innovation should be around new tools and methods of delivery.	Process

As the table illustrates, an assessment of the main areas of innovation 'so far' among the case study DPs shows that they are mainly engaged in **process innovation**. However, this must be qualified in a number of ways. The nature of the programme is such that each DP is potentially engaged in innovation in

a number of areas. The degree of innovation also varies widely. It is also clear that much of what looks innovative so far remains to be fully tested.

Innovation also occurs at different levels. A DP with a sub-regional focus may be innovative within the context of a given City or area, but its approach is well-known. In some cases the innovation may be indirectly linked with the primary aims of the programme (challenging discrimination), for example, in the cases of those DP testing new types of learning.

Being innovative involves a learning curve for some partners (particularly delivery partners), which are based on contractual arrangements where they deliver a set plan negotiated with their clients. If an organisation is not familiar with delivery in a developmental and experimental context, it takes time for them to adjust to a position in which they are free to develop new ideas.

The programme itself is clearly innovative. As discussed elsewhere, the partnerships themselves provide for innovative ways of working. EQUAL has successfully provided a framework to draw new actors together, to work in new contexts and to test new ideas.

## 10 EMPOWERMENT

### Key Findings:

- A greater emphasis could be made by DPs on empowerment activities earlier in the programme – particularly during Action 1.
- Disadvantaged groups have a greater role in shaping the delivery and research aspects of the DP than the overall strategy
- The main empowerment activity to date, in just under half of the case study DPs (14 out of 30), has been through the delivery of pilot products and services. In some cases, target groups are being trained to manage delivery themselves.
- The DPs are themselves becoming empowered through their links to national policy.

There is an expectation within EQUAL that DPs empower the disadvantaged groups they are working with by involving them in the organisation and management of the partnership. In doing so, the DPs are giving a voice to the groups they are supporting and ensuring that the aims of the DP are in tune with the needs of those groups.

### 10.1 Approaches to Empowerment

In practice, there are a variety of ways in which the DPs have attempted to engage with disadvantaged groups. How an individual DP approaches this question is very much dependent on:

- The types of organisation involved in the partnership (in terms of day-to-day contact with hard-to-reach groups)
- The specific nature of the target group
- The overall aims of the DP (e.g. a DP undertaking action research will engage and empower disadvantaged groups differently to a DP focusing on capacity building).

Overall, **empowerment is probably the most difficult of the key principles to deliver effectively**. The evidence from the programme so far shows that many DPs have faced major challenges on this issue:

- There was very little in the way of initial research, which can be the start of the engagement process, with disadvantaged groups undertaken during Action 1
- Plans to develop empowerment sub-groups or to involve disadvantaged groups on DP planning and steering committees are easily delayed.

## 10.2 Main Empowerment Activities of the DPs

It is possible to categorise the **main** empowerment activity of the case study DPs at this stage of Action 2. While many DPs are engaging with disadvantaged groups in multiple ways (or are at least planning to), this attempts to identify the most concrete or significant approach to date.

### Main DP empowerment activity to date – case study DPs<sup>12</sup>

Main empowerment activity	Number of DPs
As recipients of pilot products or services	14 DPs
Research with disadvantaged groups (surveys, panels) – i.e. to assess target group needs	7 DPs
Intermediaries representing disadvantaged groups on DP Steering Group	6 DPs
Disadvantaged groups directly represented on DP Steering Group	3 DPs
No involvement of disadvantaged groups in DP	0 DPs

The table shows that all of the case study DPs are engaging with disadvantaged groups in some way. It also clearly shows that **disadvantaged groups have a greater role in shaping the delivery and research aspects of the DP than the overall strategy**.

### 10.2.1 Empowerment on Steering- and Sub-Groups

Involving disadvantaged groups directly in DP decision-making is a central way of achieving the empowerment aim. There are, however, particular issues associated with this that may explain why **empowerment on steering groups has been less prevalent than may have been expected so far**.

With the exception of a proportion of Theme A DPs, those in Themes B and I and some others, the DPs are working with a range of disadvantaged groups. This makes it **difficult for individual DPs to ensure representation of all the groups they are covering**. DPs also have to ensure they do not fall into the trap of tokenism.

They must also ensure that those involved in steering groups are effectively representing a constituency. For the hardest to reach groups, this level of engagement is practically difficult to manage, as has been apparent in Action 2 so far. It can be intimidating, and some DPs have experienced attendance problems.

An interesting idea is to have a ‘bottom up’ approach to the Steering Group. One DP has set up beneficiary groups to design a series of work packages. The role of the Steering Group is to facilitate progress rather than being the decision-making body.

<sup>12</sup> At the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts

Crucially, the timing of the intervention is important. A telling example comes from a DP which attempted to set up an empowerment forum at the start of Action 2. The forum failed as it became clear that by this stage, the **main decisions on the direction of the DP had been made during Action 1.**

#### **Key Learning on Empowerment Groups and Forums**

- Rules must be set on simple issues (e.g. who has a right to speak first at meetings). A flexible approach is required to accommodate what the beneficiaries agree.
- Involving beneficiaries in all major decisions. A balance has been struck between including them as much as possible to empower them and overloading them with responsibilities. The beneficiaries on one DP now nominate one of their group to go to steering group meetings to have a greater role in organisation and management.
- Having defined their work programmes, beneficiaries in one DP needed help to get started. The original idea had been to not structure the work of the beneficiaries, but it became apparent that some wanted to have a structure imposed on them (e.g. deadlines) and this has improved motivation.

#### **10.2.2 Empowerment through research or involvement in pilot activities**

With one or two notable exceptions, the evidence we have seen in relation to effectively giving target groups a voice (i.e. where activities have been clearly influenced by them) has come from DPs' research (or contact during normal organisational operations) rather than through committee representation.

This type of empowerment happens in two ways:

- Piloting an approach or tool to inform its development – EQUAL offers the flexibility and scope for target groups to shape the content in quite a significant way.
- Using the target group to carry out research and deliver interventions – this depends on the specific groups concerned, but there are examples of DPs following this approach and it is a very strong example of empowerment.

#### **Giving 'weight' to research by putting target groups at the centre**

One DP is providing its target groups with a platform to develop their own research proposals and control over resources. The aim is to **ensure that research and policy recommendations actually come from people who experience disadvantage** and to strengthen the equal opportunities component. New methods are also being used to track personal development (e.g. measuring soft outcomes, using video diaries).

#### **10.2.3 Empowerment through intermediaries**

Thinking practically, partner organisations may have a degree of day-to-day involvement which enables them to effectively represent hard-to-reach groups.

These partners are themselves key sites for innovation – especially in cases where the DP model is running effectively.

In one example, a lead organisation has found its delivery partners becoming an additional, ‘unforeseen’, group of beneficiaries. The DP is supporting delivery partners and building their capacity to become effective providers of a particular type of learning. This is a good example of empowerment can effectively take place within the partnership as well as resulting from partnership activity.

#### **The Use of Intermediaries**

One DP used a series of intermediaries, some of whom were member of the core DP group, to help engage with small black and minority ethnic businesses, an area where as a national business support provider they had experienced previous difficulties. This approach was considered to have been effective in a number of ways, including identifying tactical approaches to working with BME firms, verifying the key issues for BME firms the DP could address, and helping engage firms that might otherwise not have become involved.

The intermediaries included individual BME firms and voluntary and community based small business service providers. These strategic and practical benefits were added to by identifying opportunities for further collaborative approaches and joint projects. Key success factors included identifying the right organisations to work with, and ensuring commitment and support as appropriate.

## 11 TRANSNATIONALITY

### Key Findings:

- Transnationality was the area where the most immediate progress was made under Action 2, although there are emerging challenges. The importance of initially agreeing modes of working and a shared understanding of the objectives of the transnational partnership look increasingly important. These agreements need to be explicit.
- The focus so far has been on exchange of information at workshops, with some staff exchanges taking place.
- Aspects of the evaluation of transnational partnerships by the DPs remain unclear/have not been finalised.

Each DP under EQUAL has to form a partnership with at least one other DP from another Member State to undertake transnational activity. These partnerships were set up during Action 1 and run over the course of Action 2, with the process of their development and the production of TCAs being illustrated in Chapter 4. While the majority of case study DPs found the process comparatively straightforward, the most common challenge was raised by the differential adherence to the EQUAL timetable by different member states.

The case study DPs most commonly have three or four transnational partners. One DP experienced with transnational working has a solitary partner, but most have avoided the risks associated with this.

At the other end of the scale is a transnational partnership based around a particularly inclusive approach which has 10 DP members, including three GB DPs. Three of the case study DPs have two separate transnational partnerships (to act as a safety net or as the unplanned result of the DP pursuing various leads during Action 1). Unsurprisingly, these multiple partnerships are progressing at a different pace, with the smaller partnerships tending to have made the most progress.

Within the programme a number of European Thematic Groups (ETGs) have also been set up by the European Commission to support mainstreaming at the European level. These groups have similar objectives to the networks set up at the national level, but have a greater focus on the transnational partnerships and on the European policy agenda. There are currently six European Thematic Groups, focusing on: Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, Equal Opportunities, Asylum Seekers and Partnership respectively. GB is acting as joint lead member state with Denmark on the Employability ETG.

The development of transnational partnerships is outlined in Part 2 of this report in the chapter focusing on Action 1.

## **11.1 Progress in Action 2**

Much like the national partnerships, the transnational partnerships have remained relatively stable over Action 2. There have only been isolated cases of DPs looking for new transnational partners (helped by the support unit).

In the early stages of Action 2, at the time of the stage 2 evaluation contacts, the transnational work of the DPs generally tended to be the aspect that had made the most concrete progress. The organisational requirements attached to transnational working locked DPs into a tightly planned series of meetings and activity planning with transnational partners.

As Action 2 has progressed in the first half of 2003, the DPs have increasingly faced challenges in transnational working. By the time of the stage 3 contacts, the overall feeling remained positive, but there have been issues relating to the relevance of partners, communication and the organisation of work. The evaluation of transnational activity is also an area where concerns remain.

There are other more specific challenges facing some DPs. Within the asylum seekers Theme, for example, transnational working is complicated by the different national rules in each Member State, particularly around the degree of access to the labour market. Separately, some DPs have found that those representing transnational partners may not have a full mandate to implement what is agreed back in their Member State and this has slowed down transnational working.

### **11.1.1 Learning from transnational working**

Those DPs with little or no prior experience of transnational working have been the ones that have benefited most so far. The experience has already resulted in learning around:

- Detailed planning – not underestimating the complexities involved
- Ensuring parity across the partnership (e.g. on language)
- The importance of informal networking and setting aside time for it.

## **11.2 Organisation of Transnational Partnerships**

Transnational partnerships tend to follow a similar model to the national partnerships by having a series of groups focusing on specific areas of interest. One model for transnational working is to have each national DP leading on a theme. The effectiveness of this model is therefore dependent on the degree to which each theme or activity is integrated.

As Action 2 progresses, there are increasing **bilateral relationships** within transnational partnerships being formed. These are primarily based on:

- Common areas of thematic interest
- DPs from two Member States being at a similar stage of advancement with regard to the area of interest
- A joint focus on a particular tool, approach or model within two of the national partnerships.

There are, however, instances of bilateral working within the transnational partnerships which are emerging less on the basis of a common thematic interest than the mode of working or shared understanding (cultural similarity). This shows the importance of building personal relationships in effective transnational co-operation.

There is a challenge for some DPs in attempting to productively use the time between transnational meetings. Some are seemingly taking an isolated approach to transnationality, with attentions and activities taking place around meetings of their transnational partnerships.

DPs also have transnational co-ordinators taking the lead on this aspect of the programme. While this is an efficient approach it can exclude partners, and a question for DPs is how they can involve more of their partners directly without making the transnational partnership less effective. Study visits and exchanges have an important role here.

### **11.2.1 *Transnational communication***

The common language for the over-whelming majority of transnational partnerships is English (29 out of 30 of the case study DPs). However, the ability of GB transnational co-ordinators to speak in the languages of their transnational partners was appreciated by the non-GB DPs contacted.

The distances involved mean that there is a limit to the amount of face-to-face meeting that can take place. Time spent in the early stages on informal networking is seen as an important pre-requisite for then being able to communicate by email or tele-conference.

### **11.3 *Activities Undertaken***

Most transnational partnerships have had **two or three transnational meetings or workshops to date**. These have focused almost exclusively on the exchange of information and sharing operational information – for example, about national research outputs and materials being developed.

This has been an important early step because each DP needs to fully understand the national context and systems of the others. It is anticipated that the transnational partnerships will increasingly move beyond exchange into more concrete parallel and joint working.

Study visits and international exchanges between transnational partners have also taken place. The development of websites for transnational working has been one of the main tangible outputs so far, which support communication, give a sense of identity to the partnership, and tend to be built around the systems being developed by one of the national partnerships.

It has been possible for the transnational partnerships to use their initial meetings to produce some form of joint material, for example:

- Using the meetings/workshops as the basis for a synthesised output on a particular area.
- Producing, at a transnational meeting, a draft framework representing four key themes and a method of work programme implementation.
- Jointly developing a soft outcomes monitoring toolkit – which will be tested later in Action 2.

Part of the transnational experience is the import and export of ideas and approaches. So far, there is a slight majority among the GB DPs who feel they are exporting more than they can learn. This has led some to question the benefits of transnational working. A major cause of this has been that the expectations of transnational partners on paper were different to what emerged later. This is partly a communication issue, but it again **emphasises the importance of the preparatory search for transnational partners during Action 1.**

An approach taken by DPs that were initially less positive about how their transnational partnerships had formed in practice has been to use early meetings as an opportunity to shape the focus of the transnational partners, and so maximise the benefits for the GB DP (e.g. encouraging them to involve particular actors etc).

## **11.4 Future**

In terms of future benefits, particular DPs are well-placed to involve beneficiaries directly in transnational meetings, and a small share of the case study DPs described planning to do so. This is a complicated area, as it depends on the DPs having well-established target group involvement nationally - but remains a strong potential area for empowerment.

More generally, there is the question of how to transfer models and approaches across Member States to new contexts. This issue has yet to be directly addressed in many cases, but will increasingly important as Actions 2 and 3 progress.

### **11.4.1 Evaluating transnational working**

There is a lack of clarity around how transnational activities will be effectively evaluated, which is a growing concern for both DPs and their transnational

partners. This implies that even **while there is an awareness of the need for effective monitoring and evaluation at transnational level, it is difficult to effectively plan and manage for individual DPs.**

These difficulties appear to come from evaluation not being considered early in the transnational planning process, leading to piecemeal actions and activities. This may in part be due to the transnational partnerships interacting in different ways and for different purposes. Also, each DP has a separate organisational structure, with joint working being just one component of the transnational partnerships (in fact, some eschew this and are based exclusively around information exchange). It is difficult to coherently evaluate a piece of parallel development in two member states. In practice we see emerging examples where evaluation is tied exclusively to specific events and meetings, which is a limited approach. In addition, there are differences in the resources set aside for evaluation by different DPs in the same transnational partnership. This creates a practical problem for effective evaluation, which is compounded by the fact that different combinations of DPs are working together on different activities within the same transnational partnership.

A common approach is to have each DP evaluate their own part of the transnational partnership, although this can lead to a lack of clarity and underplay the significance of the transnational component to EQUAL.

#### **A Framework for Transnational Evaluation**

One transnational workshop developed an evaluation framework to work as a logic chain for explaining the impact of activities, and assist partners in assessing progress by ensuring that data on each type of activity is captured.

The transnational evaluation framework contains the following headings:

- Definition of terms used (e.g. what is meant by disadvantage, sustainability, creative industries, etc.).
- Definition of target groups.
- Identification of tools / models to be used or developed.
- Listing of activities to be undertaken under 6 headings.
- Identification of stakeholders, including beneficiaries, delivery & strategic partners, policy stakeholders and any other key partners.
- Identification of project funding sources.
- Identification of strategies (local, regional, national, European) that projects are seeking to address.
- Identification of learning strategies & methodologies used.



## 12 MAINSTREAMING

### **Key Findings:**

- The vast majority of case study DPs (27 out of 30) had made some kind of policy contact outside the TNGs early in Action 2. These links have been followed up as Action 2 has progressed.
- It is too early to talk about mainstreaming impact, but the conditions for effective mainstreaming have been established. The DPs are showing a responsiveness to the policy agenda. Mainstreaming is likely to focus on practice rather than policy.
- The main benefits of involvement with the TNGs for the DPs to date have been as a forum to communicate with each other, rather than a link into national policy.
- Key challenges for the TNGs include achieving policy 'buy in' corporately, engaging a wider range of policy customers, building on the good work done so far by the TNG Chairs, facilitating cross-thematic links and finding a way to effectively include DPs from the devolved administrations.

In many ways, mainstreaming is the ultimate aim of EQUAL. It refers to the lessons from the programme feeding into the policy process and being incorporated as policy. It takes place horizontally (transfer of lessons to other agencies with similar interests) and vertically (transfer to national policy).

At this stage of the programme, it is less a case of looking at what has been mainstreamed by EQUAL (the tools, approaches and ideas are generally still being tested) and more a case of looking at the degree to which the conditions for successful mainstreaming are being set.

Overall, in comparison with previous programmes such as ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, the progress in terms of mainstreaming is profound. The extent to which DPs have made efforts to engage policy customers - locally, regionally and nationally - at the very early stages of the programme shows real potential and commitment.

DP approaches to mainstreaming can be analysed with regard to two main areas:

- The Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs) – programme infrastructure to support mainstreaming nationally at thematic level.
- Links made by the DPs to policy makers.

## 12.1 The Thematic Networking Groups

There are eight Thematic Networking Groups, one relating to each Theme being followed in GB. Their role is to *‘ensure the strategic focus of the programme’*<sup>13</sup> and to *‘enable effective dialogue between those delivering the activity and those developing the policy’*.

### 12.1.1 TNG composition

The TNGs are composed of a core policy group and a wider group including the DPs. The core policy groups were formulated at the outset of EQUAL and had a role in establishing the policy foci for the programme and appraising the initial applications to recommend which should receive funding. The general TNG groups include, in addition to the core members, the DPs operating in that Theme and other interested organisations.

Organisations and government agencies represented on the TNGs include: the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government, Commission for Racial Equality; Equal Opportunities Commission; Refugee Council; Cabinet Office; Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; Small Business Service; Adult Basic Skills Unit; and Trades Union Congress.

### 12.1.2 Development of the TNGs during Action 2

The TNGs were identified as one of the main areas of concern in stage 1 of this evaluation. This was partly the result of the groups being new, and partly a lack of clarity (expressed by both DPs and policy members) about what their roles and objectives were. DPs raised questions over the ownership of the TNGs (who was running the groups i.e. organising meetings, setting the agenda, circulating information, following-up actions), although the secretariat role provided by ECOTEC was stated from the outset. In addition, the first full TNG meetings took place when the DPs were very much focused on their own early development activities.

In stage 2 of the evaluation, a marked improvement was noted by DPs and policy makers. A clearer work plan was in place and the DPs were themselves more established. It is also important to emphasise the **key role played by the TNG chairs in the progressing the groups**<sup>14</sup>. Tasks they have been involved with and facilitated include:

- Visiting all the DPs in their Theme
- Making links to other policy customers
- Offering advice and guidance to DPs.

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<sup>13</sup> Thematic Networking Groups – Terms of Reference

<sup>14</sup> From the stage 2 and 3 evaluation contacts

The TNGs have progressed at different rates and in different ways. The number of DPs in each Theme varies considerably and this affects the dynamic – smaller Themes found it easier to function effectively while larger Themes offered greater opportunity to network. There are no linking factors across the TNGs that are holding their progress back.

As Action 2 has progressed, a greater emphasis has been placed on the **DPs as partners in the TNGs rather than recipients of a service** (part of DPs' early frustrations stemmed from an unrealistic expectation that the TNGs would bring all their potential policy customers together in one room).

The Action 3 process has also given the TNGs a clearer focus and sense of direction. The production of thematic mainstreaming plans has been a concrete task which has added substance to the TNGs.

By mid 2003, at the time of the stage 3 evaluation contacts, half of the case study DPs (15 out of 30) said they now felt part of the partnership – compared with 17 at the time of the stage 2 contacts at the end of 2002. The slight decline in part reflects a small amount of turnover in the representatives from DPs attending TNG/DP meetings, with these new representatives not being in a position to answer. **The main benefit of the TNGs according to the DPs has been as a forum for networking with other DPs and to get an idea of what others were doing.**

### **12.1.3 Key issues for the TNGs**

There are a series of key issues that have emerged over the lifetime of the TNGs that are impacting on their effectiveness:

1. **Policy 'buy in'.** The TNGs have been able to engage individual policy customers more successfully than their organisations corporately. This has meant that as individuals move post, as inevitably happens, the policy link is lost. The visibility of the programme could be higher across relevant government departments and the policy audience in general.
2. **Engaging a wide range of policy customers.** The time and resource pressures on policy makers means that it is difficult to gain large-scale commitment beyond that which has been successfully gained from the TNG Chairs. In fact, it is not necessarily a problem if other policy representatives at TNG meetings are not senior policy decision-makers as long as they can act as an effective conduit. The emerging challenge has been engaging a wide cross-section of policy makers for meetings. There have been some seemingly sensible approaches to this that have not been successful, such as inviting policy customers to specific meetings rather than requiring them to sign-up full-time.
3. **The role of the Chair.** A committed Chair has emerged as a key success factor for TNGs, notably in terms of driving and mobilising the groups and

imposing a clear policy direction. While changes in lead policy responsibility in the early stages of EQUAL meant this took longer to achieve across the programme, it is clear that many Chairs have been putting in considerable time and effort as they can see the potential benefits from EQUAL as a testing ground. Other policy beneficiaries need to be sold the same benefits.

4. **Commonality and cross-thematic links.** The TNGs by their very nature put DPs in slightly artificial silos. There are, for example, DPs in Theme B which see themselves primarily as having an entrepreneurship focus. More significantly, as the thematic mainstreaming strategies clearly show, different TNGs are chasing the same policy audiences. This reflects a similar process that has already started happening among individual DPs. Policy stakeholders have also expressed a strong interest in linking up with DPs in other Themes. The TNGs have a clear co-ordination role here.
5. **Devolved administrations.** In relation to Scotland, in particular, there has been low turn-out at GB-TNG meetings. This is unsurprising given the distances often involved and the lack of Scottish policy representation at the meetings. Successful meetings between DPs and policy makers have taken place in Scotland, but it is important that the parallel structures are not entirely separate. There is similarly a lack of Welsh policy representatives on the GB TNGs, although this had not influenced attendance at the TNG meetings for the Welsh DPs.

#### **12.1.4 Next steps for the TNGs**

Looking forward, the TNGs can be seen to be entering a new and important stage with the mobilisation of Action 3. One recommendation from stakeholders, and which is currently being addressed, was for the TNG Terms of Reference and Mainstreaming Strategy to be reviewed in the light of the Action 3 Mainstreaming Partnership Agreements and the individual TNG strategies. Reflecting on these plans may help those involved to identify areas where greater support is required (e.g. any common 'gaps' in the plans produced), and the potential links between DPs (especially those in different themes) in terms of policy audience. These cross-thematic links are beginning to emerge, mainly at the level of individual DPs, and steps should be taken to realise their full potential.

#### **12.1.5 Links outside of the TNG**

Almost two-thirds of the case study DPs (19 out of 30) have made links with other DPs outside, as well as through, the TNG structure – which stresses both the potential for and commitment to cross programme working.

The high degree of cross-thematic relevance is highlighted by the fact that 14 of the 30 case study DPs have formed links with DPs in other Themes, at both the local and national levels.

There are a variety of origins for these extra-TNG links, notably through:

- DPs having the same partner organisations
- Contacts made at TNG meetings spurring bilateral dialogue
- DPs operating in the same region or sub-region.

## 12.2 Links to Policy Makers

The TNGs are not the only route to engaging with policy makers. Outside of the TNG structure there has been a strong emphasis from the DPs on making contact with policy customers at a variety of levels and in a variety of forms. A common approach has been to **include policy customers as partners in the DP or as part of a mainstreaming/policy sub-group within it.**

The stage 3 evaluation contacts showed that **27 of the case study DPs have followed up their initial policy contacts** since the start of 2003. This suggests that the early focus on this aspect of the programme is being sustained. At this stage the DPs are taking a cautious approach as they still do not have policy messages to provide. The approach has very appropriately been about identifying the relevant individuals and agencies, making initial contact, and sowing the seeds about the DP. It has been described by one DP as *'getting our foot in the door'*.

- **Selling the DP's potential** One DP had made particular productive links with the DTI, where information provided was described as particularly helpful by the policy customer. The information was of particular relevance to practice, with future products being anticipated eagerly. The policy customer has started to attend DP sub-group meetings, and has involved other colleagues with the DP. Shortly before the final visit the DTI committed a considerable sum of money to match fund their work, as a measure of their expectations for achievement in future. While many of the DP members were familiar to the DTI from previous contacts, the DP initially impressed them with a visit and presentation by the whole partnership, which set out how they could benefit from working with them.
- **Using the Media** A DP with a sophisticated approach to mainstreaming will use a variety of means to support the promotion of their message. Research undertaken by the DP, which is addressing gender inequality in a specific sector, showed clearly the importance of positive role models in the popular media as being a key factor for breaking down traditional gender barriers. This has affected where the DP focuses its mainstreaming and dissemination activities.
- **Getting the local policy community on board** A DP has created a Policy Group where policy makers and DP members meet to discuss the DP's activities and their policy mainstreaming capacity. The aim is to ensure sustained funding for the DP activities in the future by persuading

local and regional policy makers that its activities contribute effectively to the employability of disadvantaged groups.

### 12.3 Joint-funded Posts with Equality Commissions

The ESF Division approached each of the three equalities Commissions<sup>15</sup> during Action 1 with a view to setting up a series of jointly-funded posts to support the DPs in implementing diversity issues and in helping to support mainstreaming in these areas. Such a post has now been established with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), focusing on the issue of race. The post was filled in April 2003 and is therefore still in its early stages.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has considered setting up a similar role to focus on equalities and the gender mainstreaming issue as it cuts across all the Themes. The role may be introduced for the second round of EQUAL. One reason it has not been so far was that the EOC looked at the possibility of bringing someone in on **secondment**, but found that employers were unwilling to second a member of staff for the period of the programme.

The work of the CRE post has started with the DPs in Theme B, as they have the most direct relevance on the question on race. However, it will be rolled out to look at how the DPs in other themes are addressing the question of race. **The role therefore has a strong cross-thematic dimension.**

#### **Post to address race equality issues across EQUAL**

The post jointly-funded by ESF and the CRE has several important roles:

- 1) Strategic role in mainstreaming equalities activity – this involves looking at the work of the DPs (in Theme B and across the other Themes) and how it may inform policy developments. This fits with the CRE's brief to influence policy in this area.
- 2) Supporting DPs – this involves steering DPs towards best practice in race equality, rather than providing audits or consultancy to DPs. The aim is to empower DPs by enabling them to develop the skills to keep abreast with good practice and innovation – so that they can also develop the appropriate policy links.

Early activities have included:

- 1) Meeting all of the Theme B DPs to look at their priorities and identify the process challenges that they are facing.
- 2) Commenting on the mainstreaming proposals of the Theme B DPs within the Action 3 process. This will be augmented by support in helping DPs translate their mainstreaming ideas into an appropriate process (putting policy ideas into practice).

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<sup>15</sup> Commission for Racial Equality (CRE); Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

## 12.4 Communication and Dissemination Activities to Date

While dissemination activity would be expected to be limited at this stage, as DPs concentrate on implementation rather than evaluation and dissemination, some **21 of the 30 case study DPs described undertaking some form of dissemination activity already**. In practice, these activities referred to a combination of initial awareness and profile raising around DPs and their planned approaches (the majority), and the dissemination of early findings.

- Awareness and profile raising/promotion – most commonly communicating the existence of the DP to relevant organisations in their sector and beyond, and to potential policy influencers.
- Early dissemination – for example of early products and services developed, often in pre or early post-pilot stages.

It has also been noted as an important spin-off that the DP model can support the dissemination of activities undertaken by small partner organisations whose voices are magnified by the DP collective. This is particularly apparent in those DPs which have mixture of large and small organisations. The DP **raises the profile of smaller partners, providing them with new opportunities and enables them to disseminate more widely**.

## 12.5 Challenges for Mainstreaming

Below are some of the main barriers to mainstreaming, as raised by participants and stakeholders:

- How to convince organisations to take on board and embed the recommendations and findings of the DPs – *‘DPs need to frame their findings in terms of the target organisation’s own business objectives –be it government or employers’* (TNG member).
- How to prevent DPs competing for the same specific policy audiences – *Co-ordination and communication across the Themes, probably through the TNG structure, is one way of addressing this issue.*

The policy stakeholders involved with the EQUAL DPs have identified some key requirements for effective mainstreaming:

- DPs need to be clear and realistic in their plans (how do their policy objectives translate into mainstreaming activities?)
- They must be specific on the aspect of policy they are addressing (within the areas of, say, widening participation, skills, equal opportunities, etc).
- They need to keep up-to-date with ‘best practice’ and current thinking within policy areas, to have a clear idea of where innovation might lie.
- They need to be linked up with the appropriate scope and level of organisations for mainstreaming purposes.

## 13 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Key Findings:

- DPs have become increasingly engaged with the issue of implementing their equal opportunities strategies during Actions 1 and 2. It is still an area that some DPs are struggling to address in a concrete manner.
- Partners require support in capturing the equal opportunities lessons being learned locally.
- The use of an equal opportunities 'champion' or expert by DPs has emerged as the most effective way of engaging with this agenda so far.

There has been a tendency for DPs to assume the equal opportunities content of their activities and operations. Equal opportunities is clearly inherent in the programme itself. The main aims of the DPs also support equal opportunities in a general sense and their approaches tacitly take account of the issue.

However, assuming equal opportunities means that it has been difficult for DPs to address the issue in a concrete way. To a degree, it has just meant a need to articulate explicitly what was always there - but it has also required some DPs to think more systematically about implementation.

### 13.1 Equal Opportunities Policies

All of the DPs included an equal opportunities policy within their DPAs. The policies were fairly standard and primarily based around revised versions of the corporate policies of the lead partner or an amalgam of partners. This helped to ensure that the policies put in place by the DPs are grounded in the established practices of the organisations involved, but was a passive process for the DPs.

### 13.2 Implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy

Producing a strategy for implementing equal opportunities was a far more challenging task for many of the DPs. Where the case study DPs were requested by the support unit to revise their equal opportunities plans and strategies, this process was found to be beneficial in encouraging them to think concretely about equal opportunities issues.

Below are outlined some of the main approaches and issues associated with equal opportunities implementation:

- Equal opportunities through the **DP structure**:
  - Having equal opportunities as a **standing issue on the agenda** for all steering group meetings, maintains its centrality to the programme.

- Setting up equal opportunities sub-groups: problematic because it can ‘ghettoise’ the issue. Also, some DPs use these groups to focus on how their activities can best support equal opportunities and diversity, while others use them as a forum for empowerment (as an end in itself rather than a means).
- Introducing equal opportunities as a cross-cutting issue for each of the DP’s sub-groups, also maintains the centrality of equal opportunities but assumes a widespread understanding of the relevant issues across the partnership.
- Ensuring that the partnership itself is composed of a range of groups specialising in different diversity issues (such as Race Equality Councils; mental health groups etc).
- Using **service-level agreements** to support equal opportunities:
  - Making partners explicitly sign-up to equality principles (this has been shown to impact in some cases on partner involvement and therefore be quite a useful tool).
  - Involving employers of the basis of them meeting equal opportunities criteria.
  - Judging internal applications for DP funds – to undertake research – on the basis of applicants taking account of equal opportunities issues.
- Using ‘**champions**’ within and outside of the DP:
  - Over 2003, some DPs have begun to recruit **equal opportunities officers** to support partners and work with beneficiaries. Where this has been the case, impressive results have been seen already, with the officers providing an additional specialist resource. In one case study DP, the equal opportunities officer has been used to work directly with small employers on a consultancy basis to develop their equal opportunities capabilities. If the DP partners are seen as beneficiaries of the programme, this is also a direct way of addressing their needs.
  - Having an individual resourced to spend time with partners supporting them in ensuring that specific pilots and activities take account of equal opportunities issues. This also empowers the partner organisation.
  - A similar approach is to use expertise from within existing partner organisations (e.g. one DP is taking advice from the LSC’s equal opportunities adviser).
  - Not only can this support the DPs internally, but it is possible to **encourage representatives within partner organisations to then**

**act as champions** for equal opportunities within their organisations (one DP's large employer partner has recruited a diversity manager since being involved in EQUAL).

- Research and training:
  - Diversity training for DP project staff. Training needs analysis has been undertaken with partners, which has led to follow-up training.
  - Equality audits – planned by over half of the case study DPs (17 out of 30), but yet to be actioned in many cases, typically because of delays in setting up delivery activities.
- Through the **tools and activities** of the DP:
  - Providing consultancy support to employers to change their practices on equal opportunities (one DP is providing 'HR/equal opportunities health-checks' on the basis of 10 days of support followed up by six-monthly reviews, which has led to employers introducing new monitoring procedures).
  - Sitting as a global partner on a round table forum aimed at CEOs/Chief Executives and involving senior political figures to support the business case for diversity.
  - Diversity-proofing all DP activities – eg ensuring venues (disability access), timings of meetings/events (accounting for childcare responsibilities), language and documents reflect the diversity agenda.
  - Developing materials – eg a CD-ROM for employers on promoting diversity as part of the DP's main activities.

#### **Engaging SMEs with the diversity agenda**

Gaining commitment of SMEs to address equal opportunities, diversity and basic skills agendas is a difficult issue. The solution of one DP is to 'make it as easy as possible'.

The DP has used the 'halo effect' i.e. involving a large company to lead the network and act as an incentive for other firms to engage. In one network this is a company with a strong local reputation that other companies are keen to associate with. In a second network run by the DP, the network has been built around the lead company's supply chain.

Progress within the network is encouraging and the DP has understood that business survival comes first to SMEs. The DP facilitated network meetings that initially focused on commercial issues. Gaining buy-in from SMEs has enabled the DP to introduce the equal opportunities agenda. The network helps companies do their business - and at the same time learn and exchange practice on equal opportunities issues. The DP has consultants on hand to signpost companies to packages that can help them address workplace issues – or to work with a company to tailor an individual solution.

### 13.3 Looking Forward

The area that remains a challenge for DPs and the programme, is how to effectively capture the indirect or 'spin-off' equal opportunities and diversity impacts later in the programme. A DP with its primary focus in one area may have relevance in another area. There may be wider applications for its 'products' than it realises, for example:

- DP with primarily a BME focus running a pilot with a specific focus on the situation of BME women
- DP focusing on communication and remote access to training in rural areas may produce materials that are relevant and useful for people with disabilities.

Given that each DP is undertaking a number of different activities, it is expected that it will be increasingly possible to make these connections across Themes. In this context, **having an individual with responsibility for supporting and promoting diversity issues across the whole programme is likely to be beneficial.**

Finally, two main challenges can be identified to ensuring that the equal opportunities impacts of EQUAL are maximised:

- How to ensure that ***each partner within each DP*** is adequately supported and equally able to meet the requirements of their workplans.
- How to ensure that the ***cross-thematic equal opportunities lessons*** are captured and are applied as fully as possible.

## **Part 4: Study Recommendations**

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This final part of the report provides the study recommendations, for both the current and future rounds of the programme.

## 14 RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter provides our recommendations, based on the evaluation of the Round 1 EQUAL partnerships and of relevance to the current and subsequent programme rounds. The recommendations are grouped by topic as follows:

- Programme and Process Issues – including the application phase; Actions 1, 2 and 3; and monitoring, evaluation, support and guidance.
- The EQUAL Principles – namely partnership; innovation; empowerment; transnationality; mainstreaming; and equal opportunities.

Within each topic, the audience for each recommendation is highlighted, between:

- Managing Authority and Support Units (MA/SU)
- Development Partnerships (DPs)
- Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs).

### 14.1 Recommendations for Programme and Process Issues

These points relate to the particular phases (or Actions) of the programme and the supporting infrastructure.

#### 14.1.1 *Application phase*

Chapter 3 of the report described the application, appraisal and selection approach followed in Round 1 of the programme. Overall the approaches followed were considered to work well, although the ‘non competitive’ approach followed in Scotland appears to have led to weaker partnerships than identified elsewhere. Our recommendations for Round 2 of the programme are set out below:

- The policy coverage of the first Round of EQUAL is considerable, and in line with both the objectives and policy areas set for the programme at the outset and the European Employment Strategy and social exclusion policy. There are three areas where more activity could be focused, namely the disability and health communities nationally and rural areas and issues in Scotland. ***We recommend that consideration be given to attracting more applicants from these policy areas in Round 2 of the programme (MA/SU).***
- Given their important role in the selection process for Round 1 DPs, ***we recommend that TNGs and their policy representatives continue and expand this role in the application stage. This should include the promotion of the Round 2 call and providing support to***

**promoters during the application stage (TNGs).** This early policy involvement will also help ensure that DPs develop an early focus on mainstreaming, as well as making policy links from the outset.

- To support the extension and deepening of their role in Round 2, **we recommend that attempts are made to widen the pool of expertise within the TNGs, potentially including practice (to advise on issues of practice and practicability) as well as policy experts (MA/SU and TNGs).** However, care must be taken to avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, the potential for which may be heightened with the involvement of practice experts.
- The ‘non competitive’ bidding process in Scotland has not led to stronger partnerships being formed. **For Round 2 in Scotland, we recommend that consideration be given to allowing organisations to select their own DP partners (MA/SU).**

#### 14.1.2 Action 1

The Action 1 stage was found to be an important and useful period for DPs to finalise their proposed activities, and develop and firm up their national and transnational partnership arrangements. On this basis **we recommend that as long a time as possible is dedicated to Action 1 activities, without extending the end date, for Round 2 of the programme (MA/SU).**

However, as Chapter 4 described, it was not always clear what activities DPs had undertaken, what their tangible outcomes were, and how they had influenced plans for Action 2 activities. To ensure that maximum benefit is derived from Action 1, **we recommend that a more prescriptive approach be followed for Round 2, with DPs being encouraged to undertake more solid activities as follows:**

- **Producing a formalised workplan for the Action 1 period, to include time-bound milestones and outcomes to be achieved.** The workplan should include the establishment of operational principles and agreements with partners (so supporting the development of the DPA and TCA), as well as considering the most appropriate means of empowerment and contact with target groups.
- **Specifying the initial research activities to be undertaken during Action 1 in the workplan,** to test the rationale for the DP concept and as a means of early engagement with target groups.
- **Considering sustainability issues from the outset, and as a feature in the Action 1 workplan** - including the potential for sustainability of both the partnership and the products and services to be developed, once EQUAL funding ceases.
- **Requiring an evaluation report to be produced at the end of Action 1,** describing what was undertaken during the period, the outcomes

achieved, the findings from the preparatory research, and their implications for Round 2. This report should be presented with the DPA and illustrate how the findings from Action 1 support the DP's proposals for Action 2.

In addition, a series of developmental activities were often left until the start of Action 2, which could have been arranged or at least prepared for during Action 1. **We recommend that DPs make firm preparations for rapid mobilisation in Action 2 in the following areas:**

- **Recruitment of staff** – in particular recruiting a project manager early in Action 1 where possible, or making preparations for their recruitment as soon as Action 2 funding is confirmed.
- **Establishment of premises** – and the establishment of operational systems and practices.
- **Development of contractual arrangements** between lead and delivery partners.
- **Securing match funding for Actions 2 and 3** – either by formalising commitments made at the application stage, or by identifying and securing funds from other appropriate sources.

We understand that the GB Support Unit is planning to visit each DP during the Action 1 stage, which will also help to ensure that DPs' attentions remain focused on tangible activities. If there are not already plans to do so, **we recommend that initial project visits take place with Round 2 DPs across the programme as part of Action 1 (MA/SU).**

Finally, the importance of ensuring the efficient handover of responsibility for DP management between the application and Action 1 (as well as Action 1 to Action 2) transition stages was stressed. This may refer to transition between initial application writers and initial project managers (possibly within the same organisation), and from initial project managers to newly recruited DP managers. **We recommend that DPs pay particular attention to ensuring that individuals taking responsibility for DP management are well briefed and have a full understanding of the rationale, objectives and direction of the DP (DPs).** This message could also usefully feature in the Round 2 guidance and good practice materials.

### **14.1.3 Action 2**

In Chapter 5 DPs' implementation experiences under Action 2 were described, and the early benefits and impacts of their work to date summarised. While some delays with early implementation were identified, many of these would be expected given the newness of the programme and the need for DPAs to be of a uniformly acceptable standard.

To ensure that the robust assessment and formal approval of DPAs can take place as rapidly as possible, **we recommend that face-to-face meetings are instigated by the Support Units with DPs earlier in Round 2, to allow major or multiple DPA queries to be dealt with more effectively (MA/SU)**. While resource-intensive, these meetings may save time overall and allow greater clarity of understanding for DPs. We recognise, however, that responses to one set of questions may lead to others being raised, and that all questions may not be able to be answered in one session.

As Round 1 (and eventually Round 2) DPs progress through the Action 2 stage, we recommend that they:

- **Ensure that they identify and communicate early impacts and effective products/services** – to retain existing and attract new policy interest (DPs).
- **Continue to consider the sustainability of both their products/services and the DPs themselves** – based on initial plans from Action 1, inevitably re-focussed based on lessons from Action 2 (DPs).

Finally, it will be important that DPs' activities remain focused on relevant policy topics and issues, which will be subject to change over the programme period. Continuing the processes established under Round 1, **we recommend that the TNGs and Support Units continue to keep the DPs informed of relevant policy developments**, and the potential contribution that EQUAL can make in supporting them (TNG and SU).

#### **14.1.4 Action 3**

Early preparation for, and progress with, Action 3 of the programme was described in Chapter 6 of the report. Although in the planning stage at the time of the evaluation, the Action 3 approach in GB has been effective in raising the profile of mainstreaming with the DPs, and in focussing TNG activities. Consequently **we recommend that the approach followed in GB is continued in Round 2**. It is clear that the imposition of a deadline for the development of Action 3 plans for GB DPs focussed attentions, and encouraged all DPs to consider mainstreaming earlier rather than later in the programme.

However, DPs have been less able to develop combined Action 3 applications, and **we recommend that TNGs consider how best they can encourage DPs to work together on mainstreaming under Round 2 (TNGs)**. Given the barriers to the administration of combined Action 3 activities, **a co-ordinated Action 3 approach should be promoted for Round 2 (TNGs and DPs)**, where DPs submit individual mainstreaming bids in a co-ordinated manner, brokered by the TNGs, and following a strategic approach to working with a policy body or area.

Given that different approaches to Action 3 are being followed in Wales and Scotland, **we recommend that steps are taken to ensure lessons are exchanged between GB, Scottish and Welsh MAs.** If not doing so already, policy representatives from TNGs from all three areas should be invited to events and copied into materials circulated.

A common difficulty across the DPs has been in engaging national policy customers for match funding for Action 3 activities. **Our recommendations for Round 2 of the programme in this regard are:**

- **For DPs to attempt to identify sources of match funding as early as possible,** and as a key part of their Action 1 activities (DPs).
- **For DPs to identify and communicate their early successes to potential policy customers,** who will often need to be convinced of the potential benefits of match funding mainstreaming activities (DPs).
- **For TNGs to direct current policy representatives involved in the programme towards new Round 2 DPs** of potential relevance to them (TNGs).

Finally, **we recommend that consideration be given to including additional Support Unit DP visits to focus on Action 3 activities,** to take place after Action 2 is completed. These would allow for specific progress with dissemination and mainstreaming to be reviewed, and appropriate support offered.

#### **14.1.5 Monitoring, evaluation, support and guidance**

Chapter 7 described DPs' monitoring and evaluation activities and key issues, as well as reviewing their experiences of the support and guidance offered to them.

##### **Monitoring**

One of the key issues for Action 2 in Round 1 has been the resourcing of the administration and monitoring requirements of the programme, with many DPs finding that they had allocated insufficient resources to this aspect of their work. As the scale of the information required for compliance is not likely to alter fundamentally for Round 2 of the programme, DPs must ensure they are adequately resourced to meet these requirements. **Our first recommendations for monitoring relate to ensuring that DPs have adequate resources and expertise to meet the requirements of the programme, and are provided below:**

- While dependant on the characteristics of individual cases, **DPs must give serious consideration to the nature and level of resources and expertise required to meet their overall administration and monitoring responsibilities.** The key variables to consider include the size of the partnership, its delivery and funding structures, the capabilities

of delivery partners to collect and report monitoring information and the extent to which partners may need to be supported (DPs).

- Within each DP, the specific responsibilities of lead partners for collecting and reporting monitoring information from delivery partners must also be considered. **Lead partners must pay particular attention to the implications of the size and nature of their delivery arrangements when allocating resources for monitoring** (eg the need to collect, chase and support other partners) (DPs).
- **DPs should also ensure, and make the appropriate resources available, for the design, development and implementation of appropriate monitoring systems**, and their introduction and implementation across the DP delivery partners (DPs).

In addition:

- **DPs should be encouraged throughout the application and DPA development stages to ensure that they have adequately provided for their monitoring activities and not under-resourced administrative support in their bids (MA/SU)**. This would be best achieved through inclusion in guidance and other programme documentation, and consideration as part of the initial application and DPA appraisal process.
- To support the development of effective monitoring approaches and avoid duplication of effort, **the lessons of Round 1 DPs and good practice in meeting monitoring requirements should be pooled, and shared with both Round 1 and Round 2 DPs**. Topics of particular relevance would include the development of effective monitoring systems, and success in working with hard to reach or particularly sensitive target groups (MA/SU).

Chapter 7 also referred to the mis-match between the nature of the monitoring information required and the aims and objectives of both the programme and individual DPs. Here **we recommend that:**

- Consideration be given to **amending the nature of the monitoring information required across the programme** to more accurately reflect its developmental nature, and to **attempt to capture the achievement of its mainstreaming objectives** (MA/SU).
- **Monitoring requirements at the thematic level be reviewed**, to ensure the most relevant sets of data are collected for the theme and its specific activities and impacts.

## Evaluation

The DPs are progressing well with the development and implementation of their overall evaluation approaches, although some uncertainty remains. Given the importance of evaluation to the programme, **we recommend that:**

- ***The importance, role and purpose of evaluation continues to be stressed in programme documentation and guidance materials (MA/SU)***
- ***That practical lessons and experiences from Round 1 are reviewed, and effective models and approaches shared between both Round 1 and Round 2 DPs (MA/SU).*** This could follow a workshop approach, with DPs (and their evaluators) presenting on the approaches followed and early benefits.
- ***DPs and their partners are encouraged to consider evaluation from the outset (DPs)*** – supported by the earlier recommendation that evaluation planning and activity be formally included under Action 1.

## Support

The majority of case study DPs described being satisfied or very satisfied with the support received from the Support Units, in particular the provision of a named contact. Where additional support requirements were identified, these most commonly related to mainstreaming and compliance with monitoring requirements, and **we recommend that the proposed support strategies and guidance materials for Round 1 DPs reflect these requirements (MA/SU).**

## Guidance

The experience of the programme so far has raised a series of issues, as well as provided potential content, for subsequent programme guidance materials. We understand that both revised guidance and documents on good practice identified in Round 1 of the programme are being produced, and reference is made to the need for guidance as part of the specific recommendations within this chapter.

Recommendations for potential topics to be included in the good practice and guidance materials include:

- Being a DP partner - to focus on issues such as potential roles within a DP, responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation, and the provision of financial/beneficiary information.
- Partnership models – and guidance on which models may be appropriate in different circumstances.

- Good practice in preparing for mainstreaming – including approaches to identifying potential policy contacts, promoting DP activities and communicating early successes to capture policy interest.
- Monitoring and evaluation – importantly around the requirement for the adequate resourcing of administrative support, and effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation identified under Round 1.

As well as the production of written materials, ***we recommend that the proactive dissemination approaches followed in Round 1 are continued in Round 2***, which were considered particularly useful by the DPs (MA/SU and TNGs).

Finally, ***we recommend that DPs consider producing their own materials to introduce the DP and its key objectives and activities, which also set out the key requirements and responsibilities of partners***, as a means of setting the context for their specific work areas and providing an overview of the programme for partners. ***We also recommend that these materials are introduced to partners in a dynamic and proactive manner***, through DP events etc. (DPs).

## 14.2 The Principles of EQUAL

The following recommendations relate to each of the underlying principles of EQUAL.

### 14.2.1 Partnership

The partnership principle is central to the EQUAL programme, with DPs following a range of partnership models and structures and involving a range of partners at the local and national levels. Chapter 8 presented our findings in this area, and ***our recommendations for the partnership principle for Round 2 DPs are as follows:***

- ***Guidance materials and other programme documentation, such as good practice guides, should refer to the different DP models identified during Round 1, and their comparative strengths***, to inform potential Round 2 DPs – so they can identify which are best suited to their scale, nature and aspiration (MA/SU).
- ***In establishing their partnerships and preparing for implementation, Round 2 DPs should consider the following:***
  - ***The importance of strong project management and the role of the lead partner in driving activities forward***, and allocate staffing resources accordingly (DPs). As described previously, DPs should seek to recruit a project manager as soon as practicable in the programme.

- ***The establishment of effective communications systems between the lead and other delivery partners from the outset***, to include approaches for monitoring the progress of the activities of delivery partners (DPs).
- ***Ensuring that relevant and appropriate contractual arrangements are in place between lead and delivery partners*** – setting out expectations for delivery, timescales and targets where relevant (DPs).
- ***DPs should consider succession planning for key individuals within DP partner organisations, given the finding that individuals changing posts was a key reason for partner drop-out.*** Potential steps include asking for as much notice of individual changes of post as possible/requiring a ‘DP notice period’, and when a change is notified ensuring a successor representative is identified, briefed and introduced to other partners while the former representative is still in post (DPs).

#### **14.2.2 Innovation**

As Chapter 9 illustrated, several sources of innovation were identified around the EQUAL programme, not least the DPs themselves in bringing new partners together in new ways to test new ideas.

Identifying and communicating the success or otherwise of the different ideas trialled on an ongoing basis is an important part of the programme. ***We recommend that DPs continue to report via the TNGs on the success and potential application of their innovations, as well as what did not work and why (DPs and TNGs).***

While too early in the programme to comment on the effectiveness of many of the approaches tested, it is recognised that the most innovative approaches will be accompanied by a degree of risk. While the Significant Change process provides a mechanism for DPs to adjust their plans based on their implementation experiences, the early consideration of the risks associated with their innovative approaches would be beneficial. To help reduce the potential impact of these risks, and ensure DPs consider them fully, ***we recommend that Round 2 applications and DPAs feature an assessment of the risks associated with the innovative actions proposed (MA/SU and DPs).*** The plans would be outlined in initial applications and detailed in the subsequent DPAs, following the Action 1 development stage.

#### **14.2.3 Empowerment**

The empowerment principle has been the most difficult for DPs to effectively engage with in the evaluation period, and Chapter 10 described the activities and approaches followed to date. ***Our recommendations are set out below:***

- ***Round 2 DPs should be encouraged to undertake empowerment activities from the outset of the programme,*** and to take active steps

to identify and engage with relevant target groups as a key component of Action 1 (DPs).

- **Potential routes to involving target groups include recruitment to steering groups and involvement in early research activities, and both should be considered by Round 2 DPs.** When undertaken, involvement in initial research has been useful in both identifying target group issues and providing potential individuals to empower (DPs).
- **In Round 2, the findings of research with target groups, and their other contributions to setting the direction of the DP, should be reported in Action 1 reports** – to support the rationale for the DP and evidence need/demand for the activities proposed, as well as focusing DP attentions on early empowerment activities (DPs).
- Given the difficulties identified in implementing empowerment activities in Round 1, **approaches found to be effective in Round 1 should be documented in programme guidance materials** – to allow them to be replicated by Round 2 DPs (MA/SU).

#### 14.2.4 *Transnationality*

While transnationality was the area where the most immediate progress was made in Round 1 of the programme, challenges to the effectiveness of transnational partnerships were also identified. As Section 4.4 described, while the majority of DPs found the processes of partner identification and TCA development straightforward, an equal share referred to the difficulties caused by variations in adherence to the EQUAL timetable between the Member States. Any response to this issue will need to be formulated at the European Commission level.

Chapter 11 presented the study findings on transnationality, from which two recommendations are drawn:

- Based on Round 1 experiences, **Round 2 DPs should ensure that shared understandings, objectives and initial modes of working are agreed with transnational partners from the outset (DPs).**
- Similarly based on Round 1 experiences, **Round 2 DPs should establish frameworks and approaches for the evaluation of their transnational partnership and its activities from the outset,** potentially as part of the initial partnership meetings and to inform TCA development.

#### 14.2.5 *Mainstreaming*

The process of mainstreaming is fundamental to the achievement of the objectives of EQUAL, and an area that poses many challenges to its realisation. While still at a comparatively early stage of the programme, considerable progress has been made in setting the conditions for successful

mainstreaming, as described in Chapter 12 of the report. Previous Section 14.1.4 provided specific recommendations for the Action 3/mainstreaming stage of the programme, and this section provides recommendations for TNG and other policy contacts.

One of the key developments under EQUAL, and itself a component in the overall innovation associated with the programme, is the establishment and operation of the TNGs. As the report describes, the TNGs and their policy representatives have already made a series of positive contributions to Round 1 of the programme, including participating in the initial DP selection process, driving Action 3 forward, and bringing DPs together for peer review and networking. Understandably given the newness and scope of the TNG approach, a series challenges remain, and **our recommendations for the TNGs are as follows:**

- **Ensuring that cross-thematic links are made by encouraging DPs to link up with the TNG they consider most relevant** – a process already started at DP and TNG levels, but which may need more structure as Action 2 continues. **The potential for cross-thematic linkages should also be identified from the outset for the Round 2 DPs.**
- Wherever possible, **promote joint-funded roles to support the cross-programme exchange of information and learning**, such as the post jointly funded with the CRE, to allow relevant policy lessons to be identified across the TNGs.
- **Continue to communicate the importance and value of engagement with policy representatives – through the promotion of early ‘wins’ and using department-to-department links** to widen the circle and ‘market’ the programme to individuals and policy fields which are less engaged.
- Build on an approach followed by one TNG and **hold briefing events for a wider cross-section of policy makers**, once there are sufficient lessons to transfer to enable bite-sized links to policy. It is not necessarily important to policy customers whether the messages presented are ‘sold’ as EQUAL messages, as interest is less likely to be in the programme *per se* and in the more general themes that it is well-placed to address.
- Establish a **distribution list** for key materials to reach policy representatives outside the TNG – sourced from where actual or potential interest has been shown but not to the degree of actually joining the TNG.
- **Refine the role of the TNGs now that Action 3 has started, with the main focus being on supporting DPs with the ‘mechanics’ of mainstreaming.** This means using the MPA as a basis and filling in the gaps on how a specific audience should be reached. TNG policy representatives also have an important role to play in ensuring DPs activities remain focussed on policy changes and developments, and ensuring their continued relevance.
- **Manage the expectations of Round 2 DPs in regard to the role of the TNGs** – by balancing the benefits they offer with the requirement for DPs to contribute to them, and explaining that they may not be able to encompass all relevant policy customers as core members.

In addition to the mainstreaming role of the TNGs, the vast majority of Round 1 DPs described making contacts with policy representatives independently, either by including them as partnership members or by actively 'marketing' themselves to relevant individuals. Our **recommendation for Round 2 of the programme is that programme guidance and other documentation stresses the different options that can be combined in DP mainstreaming strategies**, and the potential benefit of the early consideration of mainstreaming and making appropriate contacts.

#### **14.2.6 Equal opportunities**

Equal opportunities issues are central to both DPs and the EQUAL programme, both in terms of the products and services they are trialling and the ways in which the DPs operate as organisations themselves. The key development and issues were described in Chapter 13 of the report. In addition Chapter 3 described how the adoption of equal opportunities gateway questions by the Objective 3 programme represents an early mainstreaming outcome for the programme.

Our recommendations for the principle of equal opportunities refer to both generic and Round 2-specific issues. **For Round 2 we recommend:**

- **The equal opportunities gateway questions in the initial application for Round 1 of the programme are retained for Round 2** – as a means of ensuring the centrality of equal opportunities continues to be stressed (MA/SU).
- **Steps be taken in Round 2 to ensure a more explicit and continued focus on DP equal opportunities implementation strategies, through:**
  - The **recruitment or involvement of individuals with specific expertise** in the field of equal opportunities/diversity, with the explicit role of supporting partners (DPs).
  - Introducing the **opportunity for DPs in their DPAs to address the implications of their proposed activities in other specific equal opportunities contexts**. As well as making equal opportunities a concrete issue for DPs, this information would be a potentially useful tool for identifying potential cross-thematic links and targeting policy maker attentions (MA/SU).
  - To ensure that Round 2 DPs are best equipped to prepare for the equal opportunities aspects of their work from the outset, **applicants should be made aware of good practice in equal opportunities implementation (the 'how' question)**. These lessons could be sourced from both Round 1 experiences, and lessons and key considerations from a wider base.

As Chapter 13 described, while progress has been made in mobilising DP's equal opportunities activities, challenges remain in maximising the equal opportunities impact of the programme. For **existing Round 1 and future Round 2 DPs, we recommend:**

- **DPs provide direct support to each partner as required** – for example:
  - Through the provision and adoption of good practice principles - such as appropriate approaches for targeting and engagement.
  - Reviewing the ways in which partner and wider DP activities are supporting specific target groups.
  - Seeking to capture internal learning, even if it does not relate to the main DP objectives.
- **Focus is retained and heightened on identifying and communicating cross-thematic equal opportunities lessons (TNGs, MA/SU)** – the key area for cross-thematic exchange given the nature of the programme. Previous recommendations on cross-thematic exchange feature in section 14.2.5, and the joint-funded post approach being followed with the CRE should continue to be considered more widely. More broadly, steps should be taken to:
  - Harness lessons on race, gender, disability, age etc as they emerge outside of the Thematic fields.
  - Consider how the many lessons from EQUAL can be applied to specific equal opportunities contexts.
  - Enable DPs to link up with relevant stakeholders (eg EOC, CRE, DRC) outside of their individual Themes.

## ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

This annex outlines the methodology that has been pursued by GHK Europe and the Gilfillan Partnership over the course of the evaluation.

The Mid-Term evaluation has run from April 2002 to the completion of this final report in September 2003. It is based primarily around a case study based approach supported by interviews with key programme stakeholders.

There have been three stages to the evaluation. Central to the approach followed are multiple visits to 30 case study DPs and on-going contact with stakeholders, policy and TNG representatives.

The three stages of the evaluation were as follows:

- Stage 1: Project Commencement – April-September 2002
- Stage 2: Second Fieldwork Round – November 2002-March 2003
- Stage 3: Final Fieldwork and Project Completion – April-September 2003

The stages and individual tasks are summarised in diagrammatic form as Figure A1, and described in more detail below. Each of the stages completed with the production of an interim (or final) report.

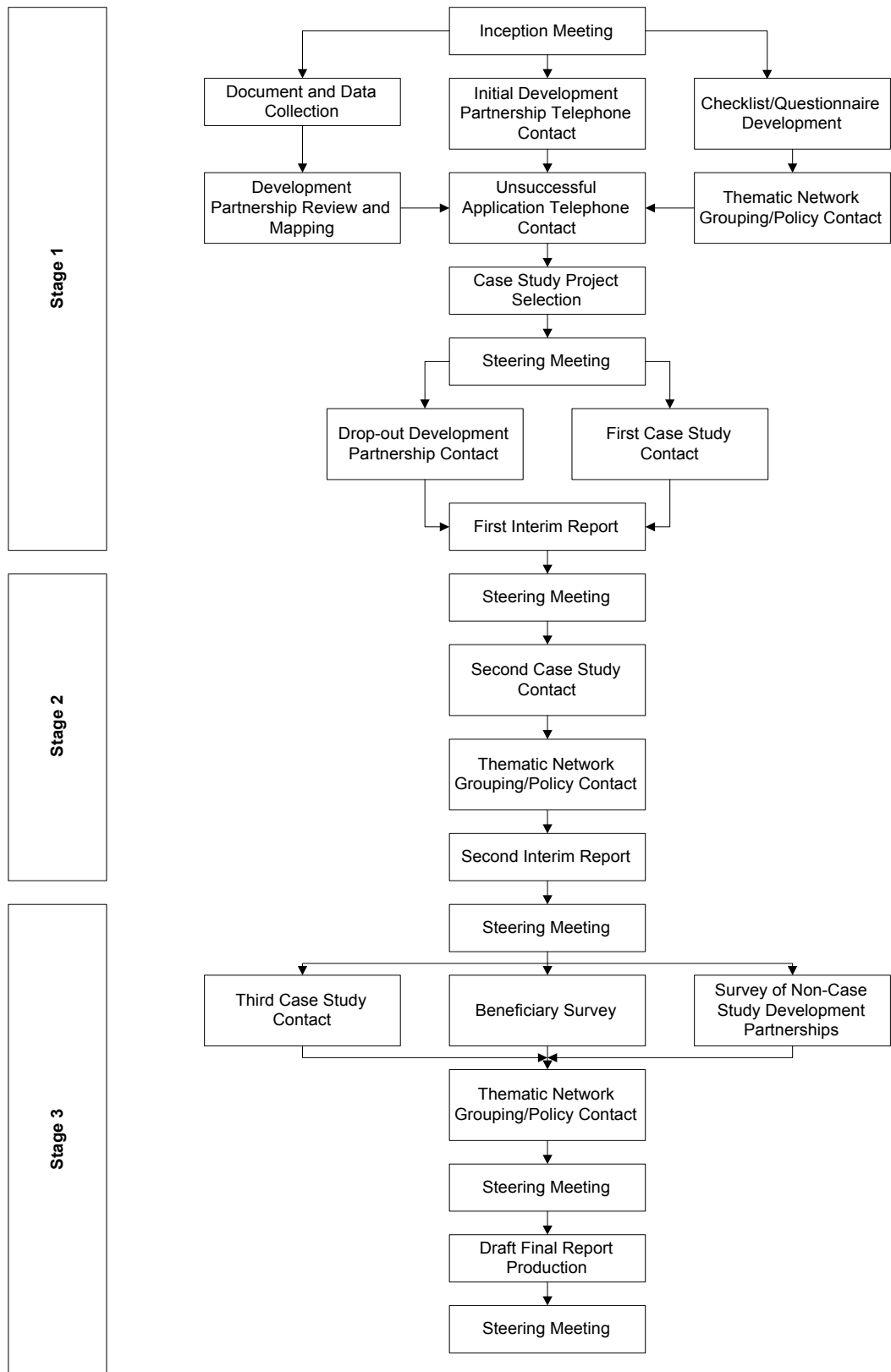
### **Stage 1 – Project Commencement**

This stage included tasks associated with the set-up and implementation of the study as well as initial fieldwork with the 30 case study DPs and TNG/policy representatives.

Specific tasks undertaken under Stage 1 included:

- An initial telephone survey of all 77 DPs operating in GB – comprising short telephone interviews with DPs, to establish progress to date, key issues, and inform early preparation for the case study fieldwork.
- Telephone interviews with a sample of 12 unsuccessful bidders for EQUAL funding – to establish their views of the application and assessment and selection processes.
- Interviews with representatives of a 'key stakeholder group', to establish the background to the programme and early issues, and including interviews with:
  - Staff in GB, Wales and Scotland Support Units

**Figure A1: Summary of Evaluation Methodology and Key Tasks**



- Representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and British Refugee Council
- Interviews with representatives from each of the eight Thematic Networking Groups – to establish early experiences and progress to date, as well as expectations for the future.
- Case study selection – the identification of 30 ‘case study’ DPs selected to be representative of the national DP distribution across a range of variables, as detailed in Annex 2.
- Initial case study visits with 30 DPs – comprising contacts with DP project managers and national and transnational partners, to examine their plans and early experiences of EQUAL.

### **Stage 2 – Second Fieldwork Round (November 2002-March 2003)**

Stage 2 was intended to provide a summary update of progress for the programme and case study DPs following the initial stage and prior to the more resource intensive final fieldwork/project completion stage. It comprised the following tasks:

- Initial steering meeting – to establish the approach to the next round of fieldwork in detail.
- Follow-up telephone contact with the 30 case study DPs – to examine progress since the initial visits, identify any emerging issues and examine key success factors and potential good practice.
- Follow-up telephone contact with TNG representatives and other policy contacts – re-contacting former and making new contacts with relevant individuals to examine issues around the early dissemination and mainstreaming processes.
- Production of the second interim report – including the findings of the second round of fieldwork and the analysis of available monitoring data

### **Stage 3: Final Fieldwork and Project Completion (April-September 2003)**

The final stage of the study featured the following tasks:

- Initial steering meeting – again to establish the approach for the final fieldwork, and the format of the final evaluation report.
- Third case study visits – each of the case study DP was visited, and interviews undertaken with DP managers, partners (national and transnational), and policy representatives with whom they have engaged as part of their EQUAL work. A survey of beneficiaries also featured as part of the case studies – which required different approaches depending on the objectives and individual activities followed by each DP.

- Telephone survey of non-case study DPs – to verify the findings of the case study DPs with the wider DP population.
- Final telephone contact with TNG representatives and policy contacts – to provide their assessment of the effectiveness of mainstreaming activities to date, as well as identifying any early mainstream impacts.
- Production of final evaluation report.

## ANNEX 2: CASE STUDY SELECTION

A number of variables were used to select the 30 case study DPs, with the initial selection refined in collaboration with the steering group. Based on information available at the time of selection, the main criteria were:

- Theme
- Region of lead partner
- Regional coverage of the DP
- Type of lead partner organisation
- Funding (on the basis of initial level of funding applied for).

In addition, the initial contacts allowed particularly ‘interesting’ DPs, in terms of proposed approach and focus, DP composition and mainstreaming ambitions, to be proposed. In some categories, the number of DPs selected were boosted, for example, in Theme I where two of only three operational DPs have been included.

The initial DP selection was also revisited in the light of a need to ensure that in the largest theme (theme A) our selections encompassed DPs with a broad focus on neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion as well as DPs with a focus on a very specific target group. Below is a list detailing how our sample compares with what was the universe of 77 GB EQUAL DPs at the time of selection on each of the main selection criteria.

### 1) Theme

The thematic distribution of the sample was the key consideration in the development of the sample. Table 1 below shows the distribution of all 77 DPs between the eight GB thematic areas, and the representation in the case study sample:

<b>Table 1: Distribution of DPs by Thematic Area</b>		
<b>Thematic Areas</b>	<b>No DPs</b>	<b>Case Study Sample</b>
<b>Employability</b>		
<b>A</b>	24 (32%)	8 (26%)
<b>B</b>	9 (12%)	4 (13%)
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>		
<b>C</b>	9 (12%)	3 (10%)
<b>D</b>	8 (10%)	3 (10%)

<b>Adaptability</b>		
<b>E</b>	15 (19%)	5 (17%)
<b>F</b>	5 (6%)	3 (10%)
<b>Equal Opportunities</b>		
<b>H</b>	4 (5%)	2 (7%)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>		
<b>I</b>	3 (4%)	2 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>77 (100%)</b>	<b>30 (100%)</b>

As the table shows, the sample reflects the programme-wide distribution of DPs by theme, with over-sampling in themes F, H and I given their small size.

## 2) Regional Base

Table 2 below shows the regional distribution of the DPs in terms of the location of their lead partners. While the sample fairly well reflects this distribution, it is recognised that the location of lead organisations will be of less importance in the case of multi-regional/national partnerships.

<b>Table 2: Distribution of DPs by Lead Partner Region</b>		
<b>Region</b>	<b>No DPs</b>	<b>Case Study Sample</b>
London	16 (20%)	5 (17%)
NW	11 (14%)	6 (20%)
SE	9 (12%)	3 (10%)
Y and H	9 (12%)	4 (13%)
Scotland	8 (10%)	2 (7%)
South West	7 (9%)	2 (7%)
West Midlands	7 (9%)	4 (13%)
Wales	3 (4%)	1 (3%)
Eastern	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
East Midlands	2 (3%)	1 (3%)
North East	2 (3%)	2 (7%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77 (100%)</b>	<b>30 (100%)</b>

### 3) Regional Coverage

Given the comments on lead partner location above, the distribution of DPs by proposed coverage is shown in the table below. Three classifications were used:

- Local/Regional projects – where the partnership intends to operate at the regional level or below (sub-regional/local) in a single region or solely in Wales or Scotland
- Multi-regional projects – where the partnership intends to operate across a number of regions, including England and Wales
- National projects – where the partnership intends to operate at the ‘national’ level – i.e. including all English regions.

<b>Table 3: Distribution of DPs by Proposed Coverage</b>		
<b>Coverage</b>	<b>All DPs</b>	<b>Case Study Sample</b>
Local/regional	51 (67%) <i>Incl. 8 Scotland and 3 Wales only DPs</i>	15 (50%)
Multi-regional	10 (13%) <i>Incl. 7 multiple English regions and 3 multi-English and Welsh DPs</i>	7 (23%)
National	15 (19%) <i>Incl. 4 covering all English regions, 2 all England and Wales; 1 all England and Scotland; 6 all England, Scotland and Wales; and 2 all England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland</i>	8 (26%) <i>incl. 3 all England, Scotland and Wales; 2 all England; 2 all England and Wales; and 1 all England, Scotland, Wales and N Ireland</i>
N/K	1 (1%)	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>30</b>

To ensure a spread of DPs by multi-regional/national coverage, we over-sampled by these variables. It should also be borne in mind that at this sampling stage, coverage was based at the point of the initial application. There has been a refinement in a small number of cases from a broadly national to a multi-regional focus or, indeed, a slight shift in the multi-regional coverage in some cases.

One DP said in its initial application that its spread included all the English regions because its partnership included nationally-based organisations. In practice, it is focusing its piloting activities on three regions. However, the scale for dissemination and mainstreaming activities remains national. In other cases, slight shifts in the number of regions a DP is concentrating its activities in has been simply the result of particular partners dropping out or new ones joining.

#### 4) Lead Partner

The lead partner sector was also considered, again in an attempt to broadly represent national distribution:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>No DPs</b>	<b>Case Study Sample</b>
Local Authorities	20 (26%)	6 (20%)
Voluntary/Community	15 (19%)	5 (17%)
FE	6 (8%)	3 (10%)
Private Sector	8 (10%)	3 (10%)
Business Support Agencies	6 (8%)	2 (7%)
HE	6 (8%)	5 (17%)
RDA	3 (4%)	1 (3%)
Careers Service	2 (3%)	1 (3%)
Others	11 (14%)	4 (13%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>30</b>

As the table shows, local authorities and the voluntary and community sectors were the most common lead partners. However, the 'other' group accounted for 11 DPs, and included a range of organisations such as a National Training Organisation, the Prison Service, the Trades Union Congress and the Refugee Council. The final selection over-sampled some less common lead partners at the expense of local authority/voluntary/community agencies.

#### 5) Funding Levels

To ensure the case studies are broadly spread in terms of funding, the EQUAL Common Database was used to provide proxy financial data based on the initial amount of funding requested. The range of funding requested is as follows:

- 0.5 to 1 million Euro – 4 DPs
- 1 to 1.5 million Euro – 3 DPs
- 1.5 to 2 million - 9 DPs
- 2 to 5 million Euro – 11 DPs
- Over 5 million Euro – 1 DP
- Not known at the time – 2 DPs .

## ANNEX 3: CHECKLISTS

### THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF EQUAL

#### a) FINAL CASE STUDY CHECKLIST

This checklist is to be used in final case study interviews with DP lead partners (eg project managers/co-ordinators). The questions are intended to build on the findings of previous contacts. We are also seeking to identify good practice at all stages – with a final section at the end of the questionnaire.

#### 1. Basic Details

- a. Explain purpose of this round of fieldwork (final round of evaluation; building on stage one interview – DP development/Action1 – and stage two update – early implementation issues).
- b. Role of interviewee in DP
- c. Previous contact? If no, explain change

#### GB Partnership and Progress

#### 2. The GB Partnership – based on, and updating, Partnership mapping grid:

- a. DP Name – note any change
- b. Any change in partnership members? If so identify leavers/joiners, reason for leaving/joining, and impact/benefit of change.
- c. Any change in the scope of the partnership (eg national; single/multi-region)
- d. List of key activities / projects / pilot (marking the key activities against a (revised) timetable)
- e. Now that the DP is well into the implementation phase – outline/update any change in the DP structure and operational principles:
  - i. List and explain the function of all DP groups and sub-groups.
  - ii. How have these changed over time?
  - iii. Which groups/sub-groups worked best, which were slowest to get going, and why?

- iv. Frequency and nature of meetings
- v. Outline the extent and function of informal contact between partners (eg. bilateral contact between partners, electronic contact)
- f. Outline the nature of the involvement of each main partner to date (and summarise involvement of other partners).
- g. Have the roles of particular partners changed over time. How and why?
- h. Are future changes to the partnership anticipated? Describe and examine scheduling.
- i. Expectations for future involvement.
- j. Identify the main benefits of partnership working to date, in terms of:
  - i. The quality of the DP and its products – describe.
  - ii. Bringing breadth and depth of knowledge and experience – describe.
  - iii. Leading to unexpected synergies and added value – describe.
  - iv. Leading to collaborative opportunities outside EQUAL – describe.
  - v. Any other significant benefits?
- k. How many staff has the DP recruited since formation?
  - i. Outline roles and process of recruitment
  - ii. Explain any staff turnover issues
  - iii. How long has it taken newcomers to become familiar with the aims and operations of the DP?

**3. Action 2 Progress Report** – since last contact:

- a. What have been the main areas in which the DP has progressed since the start of 2003 (*prompt with stage 2 findings*)?
- b. Outline progress with **each** DP activity – against work plan to check if on schedule. Identify, record and discuss reasons for any slippage – what is the impact and is lost time recoverable?

**4. Action 2 Achievements** (tracked against work plan):

- a. Detailed summary of **all** DP activities/pilots:

- i. How do these compare with DPA plans. Explain reasons for any changes.
  - ii. Is progress even across all the DPs activities. If not, why not?
- b. What have the DPs 'Outputs' to date been (*term used in its broadest sense, and compare to expected in work plans, DPAs, etc*). What have they produced/established?
- c. What have been the main benefits of these outputs been to date? What practical benefits (such as adoption of practice locally) have been achieved? What are expected – and what will be needed to realise expectations?
- d. Innovation – what did the DP consider to be their most innovative approaches? Does progress to date allow them to comment on whether these approaches have proved effective, ineffective or remain to be proven?

## **Infrastructure and Funding**

### **5. Support and Guidance**

- a. What have been the DP's main support requirements during Action 2?
  - i. Have they used their SU? – if so what for, what was the outcome and how useful was the service, satisfaction (1 to 5, excellent to poor) against expectation.
  - ii. What were their views of the overall service provided by the SUs? – including events, communications, facilitation etc.
  - iii. Are there any additional areas where support is required? Identify and discuss solutions.
  - iv. Has the DP had a monitoring visit? – if so when, what were their views, and how did they benefit?

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- a. Monitoring:
  - i. Discuss views on/experience of the process – incl. appropriateness of data collected/indicators to their specific activities, ability to meet the requirements, key challenges.
  - ii. Identify what has worked effectively in establishing and implementing monitoring systems (looking for good practice examples).
- b. Evaluation:
  - i. Confirm position – evaluator appointed, work begun, reports produced (check for main DP and ‘spokes’), etc. If reports produced, what are the emerging lessons?
  - ii. If evaluator not appointed, why not and when will they be?
  - iii. Summarise evaluation approach – methodology, coverage and timetable for main outputs.

## 7. Funding

- a.
  - i. Summarise the sources of match funding for Actions 2 and 3.
  - ii. Has the DP or any partners experienced problems with regard to funding (eg completing financial returns, securing match funding etc). Explain, check for any funding not materialising, and responses.
- b. How is the DP approaching the question of match funding for Action 3?
- c. Have they been involved in the significant change procedure? If so, what has been their experience – key issues.
- d. Do they feel confident that the DP will be able to complete its activities with funding and in budget?
- e. Are there plans to sustain parts of the DP beyond the life of the programme? If so, which parts and how will this be financed? If not, when do they intend to plan for sustainability – any issues?

## Thematic Review

### 8. Mainstreaming (Part One) - Reflecting on DP rationale/aims

- a. Has the policy environment within which the DP is operating changed since the Start of Action 2? Explore change and impact on DP.
- b. Has the DP had to/been able to respond to new policy issues or developments? How has it been able to do this?
- c. In what ways has/have the DP concept/s developed over time? Is the policy focus the same? If changed describe change in focus and implications.
- d. To what extent is the work plan as set out in the DPA still current? Explain the process of updating it (administratively and conceptually – as a partnership).

### 9. Mainstreaming (Part Two) – Nature of further contacts with policy makers

- a. Has the DP continued to make links with policy customers (ie new links since last contact) **outside** of the TNGs? Explore – local, national, how engaged?
- b. Outline current nature of involvement of policy influencers:
  - i. Have initial contacts been followed up?
  - ii. Is there a strategy for maintaining policy involvement? Outline.
  - iii. Outline tangible policy benefits to date from policy contact – collect details to contact them.
- c. Dissemination to date:
  - i. Have there been any dissemination activities (aim/nature/output)
  - ii. How are the DP's activities being communicated to a wider audience?

### 10. Mainstreaming (part three) – TNGs

- a. Has the DP's view of the TNG changed since the last contact? If so, how and why? Do they now feel part of the 'TNG partnership'?
- b. What was the DP's input into Thematic Mainstreaming plans?
- c. Outline progress with Action 3:

- i. Nature of plan submitted – including involvement of all DPs in theme.
  - ii. What stage have plans reached? (eg decided on group/theme bid, funding issues, etc)
- d. Overall review of the TNG network:
  - i. Benefits – what have the main benefits been to the DP?
  - ii. Benefits – what has the DP contributed to the TNG?
  - iii. Level of involvement – frequency of attendance at TNG events, expectation of continued (and deeper?) involvement?
- e. What are your future expectations of the TNG? What will be essential to their success in mainstreaming?
- f. Outline any partnerships formed with DPs outside of the TNG – and/or in other themes.

## **11. Transnationality**

- a. Outline development and progress since last contact
- b. Review of substantive activities:
  - i. Events
  - ii. Exchange of information/experience/practice
  - iii. Parallel / joint development activities
- c. Timetable for achieving outputs
- d. What have been the overall benefits of the transnational component?
- e. Outline the barriers to transnational working the DP has experienced? How have these been addressed?

## **12. Empowerment (and link to beneficiary survey)**

- a. What progress has been made regarding the involvement of beneficiaries in the DP? Check against plans/expectations from earlier contacts, and:
  - i. Identify beneficiaries involvement in the DP to date – who, how, directly or through intermediaries, inputs (research, steering group, expert inputs, etc).

- ii. Where active and positive beneficiary involvement identified, discuss processes of identification, engagement and sustaining interest – what has worked for them? (looking for good practice). What are the main challenges?
  - iii. Benefits – however defined, for the individual, the DP, the quality of DP activities, with example for each.
  - iv. Where no/limited involvement to date, why is this and what are considered to be the main challenges in realising effective beneficiary engagement? Is it always worth the effort?
- b. Were the expectations of DP involvement described earlier realised?
  - c. What continuing/future benefits are anticipated from beneficiary involvement (focus on tangible outcomes).

**13. Equal Opportunities** – focusing on DP activities/implementation strategy:

- a. Describe/confirm equal opportunities dimension of DP – how will its activities contribute to which aspects of the EO agenda? (eg gender mainstreaming, disability, race, age, etc)
- b. Check for substantive progress – building on last contact, including progress with audits, EO Groups/officers, new strategies etc.
- c. Any examples of ‘benefits’ – eg introducing EO approaches to employers, empowering individuals, etc.
- d. Future expectations of achievement and challenge

**And Finally**

**14. Good practice**

- a. Outline any examples of good practice/where approaches have worked well in terms of:
  - i. Partnership – both GB and transnational
  - ii. Empowerment – both direct and indirect
  - iii. Mainstreaming – both via TNG and other routes
  - iv. Innovation – stimulating and early evidence
  - v. Equal opportunities – both within the DP and across its activities

## **15. Key Success Factors**

- a. Based on experience to date, what are considered to be the key success factors for:
  - i. The success of the partnership and its activities
  - ii. The achievement of the overall programme objectives

## **16. General**

- a. Reflections on Action 1 & early implementation – with hindsight, what would they have done differently?
- b. Expectations for final outcomes – what does the DP expect its main achievements to be by the end of the programme.
- c. Any other comments

## THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF EQUAL

### b) BENEFICIARY TOPIC GUIDES

#### 1 RESEARCH BENEFICIARIES

1. Context – including:
  - a. Description of beneficiary
  - b. How got involved with the DP/research project? Is involvement on-going (eg member of partnership, associate, etc) or one-off/potential future?
  - c. How is research relevant to the beneficiary?
2. What was received? Describe the research to include:
  - a. Its focus, coverage, content and broad aims/objectives.
  - b. If it is completed or on-going.
  - c. The relevance to the activities of the DP.
  - d. What were the key findings, and their implications:
    - i. For the individual recipient
    - ii. For the DP (if able to comment)
3. Views on quality of the research – in terms of:
  - a. Methodology
  - b. Coverage
  - c. Focus
  - d. Conclusions and recommendations
4. Utilisation:
  - a. Why did the individual receive the research?
  - b. Have the research findings been used? – if so by who and what for.
  - c. Describe any impacts/changes resulting, influences on policy or practice, influences on the work of the DP.
5. Continuation:
  - a. Any plans for the individual's continued involvement with the DP, or expectations.
  - b. Has their involvement to date made them more interested to get involved?

## **2 RECIPIENTS OF NEW OR PILOT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

1. Context – including:
  - a. Description of beneficiary
  - b. Summary of new product/service – including objectives, content, pilot status, processes.
  - c. How got involved with the DP/service?
  - d. How was the product/service relevant/suitable for the beneficiary?
2. Has involvement with the service completed or on-going?
3. What needs did the service seek to address? What were their expectations?
4. Benefits to date:
  - a. What have been the main benefits of the product service to date? – probe for relevant impacts (eg qualification, progression to employment etc).
  - b. What benefits are expected in the future?
  - c. Overall, how useful has the service been to date? Will the service lead to any relevant change in behaviour?
5. Does the beneficiary consider the product/service achieved its objectives? Describe.
6. How satisfied was the DP with the service overall? Rate 1-5 (1 excellent, 5 poor)
7. Is a similar service or product available locally? If not, where would the beneficiary have sourced a similar product/service?
8. How could the product/service have been improved?

## **3 POLICY INFLUENCER**

1. Context – including:
  - a. Description of beneficiary – and area of policy interest.
  - b. Identify information received – describe including policy/practice relevance.
  - c. Has information been received from more DPs than the one discussed? If so describe.
  - d. How got involved with/received information from the DP(s)? Part of DP partnership, TNG member or just received information from them?
2. Quality and relevance:
  - a. Beneficiary views on the quality of the information received – is it considered robust, rational and relevant? Describe
3. Benefit/utilisation:
  - a. Has the information been used by the recipient to date? If so, what for and what to influence, practical or policy, local, regional or national levels - describe.
  - b. If not used, is it likely to be of use in the future? Describe.

- c. If unlikely to be of use to inform policy or practice, why is this? – check for poor quality, insufficient coverage, lack of fit with current policy, good info but wrong target, nothing new for practice or policy, etc.
4. Other benefits:
- a. Noting 1b, will this contact with the DP encourage them to:
    - i. Get involved in EQUAL – either as a TNG member, DP partner, or retain a close interest in the findings?
    - ii. Remain/become more involved in EQUAL?
  - b. Have they taken any steps to become involved/more involved?
  - c. Have they identified any other areas of policy and practical interest from their involvement in EQUAL to date?
  - d. Have they identified other organisations of interest to them?
5. Future expectations of involvement:
- a. Does the beneficiary expect more relevant information to be provided through the life of the DP(s)?
  - b. Are they considering becoming more involved in the EQUAL programme overall, either via TNG links or by keeping a ‘watching brief’?
  - c. What do they consider to be the main barriers to policy influencers engaging with the programme?
6. Wider awareness:
- a. How did they first hear of the EQUAL programme?
  - b. Do they consider that the programme and its potential benefits are sufficiently well known amongst the relevant policy/practitioner communities?
  - c. Does more need to be done to raise awareness/promote engagement?

## **4 EMPOWERMENT – BENEFICIARY INVOLVEMENT IN DP**

### **4.1 DP Management and Direction**

1. Context – including:
  - a. Description of beneficiary – link to DP target groups/relevance.
  - b. Involvement with DP – role and position, eg steering group member, involved in specific sub-groups, etc. Check for multiple roles.
  - c. How got involved with the DP? Are other beneficiaries represented?
  - d. When did they get involved – initial planning (pre-start Action 1), during Action 1, during Action 2?
  - e. Any involvement in DP research into client group needs etc – if so answer questions in 4.2.
2. Nature of input:

- a. Noting 1b, what have their inputs been to the development and direction of the DP and its activities? Specific task focus, background intelligence, overall inputs to steering.
  - b. How frequently are the relevant steering/sub-group meetings held, and does the beneficiary always attend?
3. Expectations and benefits:
- a. Why did the beneficiary get involved in the DP – what did they hope to achieve or help the DP achieve?
  - b. What do they consider to be the main benefits of their work with the DP:
    - i. For themselves – what have they got from their experience to date?
    - ii. For the DP – how have they helped influence shape and direction? Try to get examples of ‘tuning’ based on beneficiary insight.
  - c. Have their expectations been realised – or do they expect them to be?
4. What are the broad benefits of involving beneficiaries in DP development and direction? Based on their experience, what are the best ways of realising these benefits?
5. Are there any barriers to beneficiary involvement in DPs and the EQUAL programme? Describe, and any suggestions for removal/widening interest.
6. Do they intend to continue their involvement with the DP? Do they expect the nature of their involvement to change?

#### **4.2 Beneficiary Survey Activities**

Where individuals have also been involved in activities to assess client group needs, ask:

- The nature of the research they were involved in.
- The approach followed (their experience of it).
- The findings (through their knowledge/involvement with DP).
- Comments on:
  - Validity of approach
  - Quality and relevance of the findings
  - Usefulness of the research – any examples of changes or focus resulting?

## MID-TERM EVALUATION OF EQUAL

### c) POLICY REPRESENTATIVE AND TNG INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

#### **1. Introduction**

- Explain that this is the third and final round of interviews for the mid-term evaluation of the EQUAL Programme. All responses are confidential.
- Establish whether the respondent participated in rounds 1 or 2.
- Confirm the respondent's role and responsibility in their organisation and establish their interest and / or level of involvement in the EQUAL programme to date, e.g.
  - TNG Chair or member
  - Policy maker / influencer targeted by a DP
  - Other.

#### **2. Nature of Involvement and Benefits of Engagement**

- If new contact, how did you initially become aware of the EQUAL programme?
- What has been the nature of your engagement (over course of whole programme so far)?
- Have you found your involvement beneficial? If so, how?
- How relevant is the EQUAL Programme to your policy priorities? How well does EQUAL reflect key policy priorities?
- Has the Programme impacted / or do you expect the Programme to impact on your organisation? In terms of influencing:
  - Policy formulation
  - Practice
  - The types and range of organisations you engage with.
- How have you been kept up to date with progress? For example
  - Through your involvement in the work of a specific DP
  - Involvement with groups of DPs or the TNG
  - Information and updates from the Support Unit
  - Other
- What more needs to be done to raise awareness of EQUAL among policy makers and influencers?

- What more can be done to engage policy makers and influencers?

### **3. Involvement in the TNG (IF RELEVANT)**

- What work has been undertaken by the TNG since last contact?
  - Summarise activities – meetings (date / planned) nature of meetings
  - Progress made on issues previously identified
  - Progress on Action 3 (has the planned approach changed?)
  - Development of the Thematic Mainstreaming Strategy
- Were you involved in the development of the Thematic Mainstreaming Strategy? If so, how? (views on relevance of strategy; process of development; what is required for successful implementation).
- To what degree do you anticipate providing match funding for Action 3?
- Are you aware of any examples of joint working between DPs and Policy representatives resulting from TNG engagement that represent good practice or are particularly innovative?
- Have any changes taken place within the TNG since last contact? (collect examples that illustrate these changes)
  - Sense of engagement / ownership of the TNG by DPs
  - Sense of engagement of policy representatives
  - Change in the roles and responsibilities of individuals
  - Change in actors involved in the TNG. What is the reason for these changes?
  - Has your perception of involvement in the TNG changed over the last 4 months?

### **4. Overall**

- Based on your knowledge of the Programme, what are your views on the progress being made. Is there anything that you are aware of that particularly stands out as good practice, or any interesting findings so far from the DPs.
- In your view, what are the challenges that the Programme will face in disseminating and mainstreaming good practice?
- What must happen for policy and practice to be successfully influenced?
- What are your views on the programme infrastructure established to support EQUAL achieve its aims?

- Are there any aspects of this that you think are working particularly well;
- Are there any areas in need of improvement? How might these be effectively addressed?
- Overall what has worked well to date, in terms of
  - Establishing the TNG
  - Attracting and retaining relevant policy representatives
  - Planning and implementing activities.

## ANNEX 4: MONITORING INFORMATION

This annex outlines the most recent monitoring data collected at programme level. It is taken from the 2002 survey undertaken by the Managing Authority / National Support Structure.

The figures relate to the impact over the whole of the programme to date. Overall programme figures are presented below along with data by pillar.

**Fig. 1 Overall Expected Impact of EQUAL**

Action	Indicator	CIP Forecast	Survey 2002
<u>Action 1</u>			
	Numbers of DP/TC set up	200	77 DPs
	Average number of partners in DP/TC	12	11
<u>Action 2</u>			
	Funding (million €)	€258.916	-
	% Of DPs attempting to measure soft outcomes	80%	47% *
	% Of DPs promoting flexible working arrangements within beneficiary companies	80%	100% **
	Number of individual beneficiaries	90,000 – 125,000	4294
	% Of women receiving support	50%	61%
	% Of Asylum seekers receiving support	-	5%
	Of those companies receiving support, % which are SME	75%	77%
	Average number of transnational meetings attended per DP <b>per year</b>	6	5 ***

**Fig. 2 Employability Impact**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>CIP Forecast</b>	<b>Survey 2002</b>
<u>Action 1</u>			
	Numbers of DP/TC set up	88	33 DPs
	Average number of partners in DP/TC	12	9
<u>Action 2</u>			
	Funding (million €)	€113.922	-
	% Of DPs attempting to measure soft outcomes	80%	41% *
	% Of DPs promoting flexible working arrangements within beneficiary companies	80%	100% **
	Number of individual beneficiaries	62,000 – 75,000	1244
	% Of women receiving support	50%	55%
	Of those receiving support, % which are Unemployed	85%	71%
	Average number of transnational meetings attended per DP <b>per year</b>	6	5 ***

**Fig. 3 Entrepreneurship Impact**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>CIP Forecast</b>	<b>Survey 2002</b>
<u>Action 1</u>			
	Numbers of DP/TC set up	44	17 DPs
	Average number of partners in DP/TC	12	13
<u>Action 2</u>			
	Funding (million €)	€56.961	-
	% Of DPs attempting to measure soft outcomes	80%	41% *

	% Of DPs promoting flexible working arrangements within beneficiary companies	80%	100% **
	Number of individual beneficiaries	10,000 – 20,000	2418
	% Of women receiving support	50%	68%
	% Of DPs supporting firms in the Social Economy	50%	77%
	Average number of transnational meetings attended per DP <b>per year</b>	6	6 ***

**Fig. 4 Adaptability Impact**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>CIP Forecast</b>	<b>Survey 2002</b>
<u>Action 1</u>			
	Numbers of DP/TC set up	56	20 DPs
	Average number of partners in DP/TC	12	12
<u>Action 2</u>			
	Funding (million €)	€72.496	-
	% Of DPs attempting to measure soft outcomes	80%	53%
	% Of DPs promoting flexible working arrangements within beneficiary companies	80%	100%
	Number of individual beneficiaries	15,000-25,000	338
	% Of women receiving support	50%	45%
	Of those receiving support, % which are Employed	90%	27%
	% Of beneficiaries participating in lifelong learning	50%	0%
	Of those companies receiving support, % which are SME	75%	63%

	Average number of transnational meetings attended per DP <b>per year</b>	6	4***
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**Fig. 5 Equal Opportunities Impact**

Action	Indicator	CIP Forecast	Survey 2002
<u>Action 1</u>			
	Numbers of DP/TC set up	12	4 DPs
	Average number of partners in DP/TC	12	10
<u>Action 2</u>			
	Funding (million €)	€15.535	-
	% Of DPs attempting to measure soft outcomes	80%	50% *
	% Of DPs promoting flexible working arrangements within beneficiary companies	80%	100% **
	Number of individual beneficiaries	3,000-5,000	74
	% Of women receiving support	80%	82%
	Average number of transnational meetings attended per DP <b>per year</b>	6	7 ***

**NOTE:**

\* The percentage of DP's promoting soft outcomes has been calculated using all the projects.

\*\* The calculation of the percentage of DPs promoting flexible working is based on the assumption that if a DP has a company on it that promotes flexible working then the DP promotes flexible working.

\*\*\* The numbers of transnational meetings have been estimated to an annual figure. The data in question is only collected over a six monthly period so the answer has been scaled up.