



Mid-term
Evaluation of
the EQUAL
Community
Initiative
Programme

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Objectives of EQUAL

EQUAL is an EU-wide Initiative, running from 2000 to 2006¹. It will receive funding of 2.85bn from the European Social Fund over that period, with match funding from national and local government and non-public sources of funds.

An Introductory Guideline to EQUAL, produced by the Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Employment², presents the context for EQUAL: "Discrimination and inequality prevent many people from playing a full role, either in the jobs market, or in society in general. New ways must be found to deal with the problems of inequality and discrimination and this is where EQUAL has a key role to play. EQUAL offers a Europe-wide focus for experimenting with new ways of tackling the problems of inequality and discrimination related to the world of work. The clear message from the Lisbon European summit (March 2000) held that 'the best way to tackle social exclusion is through a job'".

EQUAL is distinguished from the mainstream Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resource Development under the National Development Plan through its focus on testing new ways of delivery for policy priorities. It operates in the framework of the "four pillars" of the European Employment Strategy, rooted in the Amsterdam Treaty, namely employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. It also follows from Article 13 of that Treaty, which provides a legal basis for combating discrimination based on gender, race, ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The four pillars of the European Employment Strategy provide a framework for the "themes" under which EQUAL projects are funded across the EU. Eight themes fall under the pillars, and a ninth relates to the integration of asylum seekers.

¹ EQUAL follows from the EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT Initiatives, which ran from 1994 to 1999.

² Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2001), EQUAL Community Initiative – An Introductory Guideline

TABLE 1.1 EU-WIDE THEMES FOR EQUAL

Employability

- Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all
- Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market

Entrepreneurship

- Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas
- 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

Adaptability

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

Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

- Reconciling family and professional life, as well as the reintegration of men and women who have left the labour market, by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services
- Reducing gender gaps and supporting job de-segregation

Asylum Seekers

- Helping the integration of asylum seekers (in relation to the world of work)

SOURCE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION BROCHURE ON EQUAL³

Each Member State chooses a sub-set of these themes within which it wishes to explore and test new ideas relevant to discrimination and inequality in its national labour market. This flexibility for Member States is designed to improve the chances of subsequent mainstreaming of policy outcomes.

Besides this thematic approach, EQUAL incorporates five further "principles"⁴.

- **Partnership:** EQUAL funds projects implemented by Development Partnerships (DPs) rather than single organisations. A DP should "bring together interested actors, with relevant competence, who will co-operate to develop an integrated approach to multi-dimensional problems". DPs can be organised by geography (i.e. relevant actors in a specific geographic area) or by sector.
- **Transnational Co-operation:** All DPs must have at least one partner from another Member State and, in most cases, this is another EQUAL-funded DP. DPs may also co-operate with counterparts outside the EU, e.g. in candidate countries through the PHARE programme.

³ Available at www.europa.eu.int/comm/equal

⁴ These are set out in the Communication from the European Commission to the Member States of 14th April 2000.

- **Innovation:** The nature of EQUAL means that it funds ideas or approaches that are new. EQUAL uses a three-fold typology of innovations – those relating to processes (i.e. developing new methods, tools or approaches), those relating to goals (i.e. developing new objectives) and those relating to context (i.e. the political or institutional structures in which labour market issues are addressed).
- **Empowerment:** EQUAL projects should involve the different partners in the DP, and the people being targeted by the project, in decision making. The aim is to increase the relevance and focus of the project by involving these stakeholders as fully as possible.
- **Mainstreaming:** The aim of EQUAL is not primarily to fund DPs in addressing particular local or sectoral issues but to use the DPs to pilot new ideas or approaches. If these ideas or approaches are successful, the aim is to document and then transfer the learning arising. This transfer could be to other organisations similar to those in the DP (horizontal mainstreaming) or into the policy domain (vertical mainstreaming).

By mid-2003, EQUAL was funding 1,503 DPs across the EU, involving over 13,000 partner organisations. These DPs were involved in 452 Transnational Co-operation Agreements.

1.2 EQUAL in Ireland

1.2.1 Overview of EQUAL in Ireland

The Community Initiative Programme (CIP) for EQUAL in Ireland adopts six of the nine suggested EU-wide themes as being appropriate to the needs of the Irish labour market. The six include at least one theme under each of the European Employment Strategy pillars.

TABLE 1.2 THEMES CHOSEN FOR EQUAL IN IRELAND

Employability

- Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all

Entrepreneurship

- Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas

Adaptability

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

Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

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

Asylum Seekers

- Helping the integration of asylum seekers (in relation to the world of work)

SOURCE: EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME, IRELAND

Experience has shown that the thematic and partnership approach of EQUAL as implemented thus far has reinforced the fact that individuals can experience discrimination and inequality in the labour market in many different ways and in a combination of ways.

EQUAL in Ireland has a budget of 47mn for 2000-06, of which €33.9mn is contributed by the ESF, €11mn by national public funding and €2.1mn by the private sector.

EQUAL in Ireland has two "rounds", i.e. two sets of projects will be funded. The first round selected 21 projects for funding in November 2001 and most will run until late-2004. It is expected that applications for a second round of projects will be invited in mid-2004, with projects selected towards the end of 2004.

Milestones in the operation of EQUAL in Ireland from 2000 up to August 2003 are shown below.

TABLE 1.3 MILESTONES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL IN IRELAND TO AUGUST 2003

- *April 2000:* Communication from the European Commission to the Member States on EQUAL
- *May 2000:* Commission Guidelines on EQUAL published in the OJ of the European Communities
- *December 2000:* Ex Ante Evaluation of EQUAL in Ireland
- *Early 2001:* Submission of Draft EQUAL CI Programme to European Commission
- *May 2001:* Decision on Irish EQUAL CIP and funding by European Commission
- *May 2001:* Programme Complement for EQUAL approved by Irish Monitoring Committee
- *June 2001:* Launch of EQUAL Programme in Ireland
- *September 2001:* Deadline for Submission of Applications for funding under Round 1 of EQUAL
- *November 2001:* Selection of 21 projects for funding under Round 1
- *May 2002:* End of "Action 1" for the projects, its aim being the preparation of detailed draft project plans, consolidation of DPs and establishment of transnational partnerships. Formal start of Action 2 (Implementation Phase)
- *May 2002:* First joint seminar for DPs from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- *June 2002:* Publication of 2001 Annual Implementation Report for EQUAL in Ireland
- *Summer 2002:* Discussions between projects and the Technical Support Structure regarding draft project plans, including revising of plans in light of reduced final funding allocations
- *Autumn 2002:* Start of on-the-ground implementation phase for projects
- *October 2002:* First meeting of Adaptability Thematic Network
- *November 2002:* First meeting of Employability Thematic Network
- *November 2002:* Completion of First Interim Evaluation of EQUAL in Ireland
- *Winter 2002:* Launch of the first (quarterly) EQUAL Online Newsletter
- *May 2003:* First meeting of national Mainstreaming Policy Group
- *July 2003:* Audit of EQUAL in Ireland by Control and Audit Unit of DG Emplo

Table 1.3 shows that work up to mid-2001 related to the establishment of the Initiative and the structures and systems for its implementation. From mid-2001 to mid-2002, the DPs to be funded were selected, and intensive work was undertaken with them by the Managing Authority and the Technical Support Structure to support the preparation of detailed project plans and the development of transnational partnerships. Project implementation generally began in Autumn-2002, following the recruitment of project staff. When the research for this Evaluation was undertaken, most DPs were about half-way through the period of implementation for the Round 1 projects⁵.

1.2.2 Implementation Structures for EQUAL in Ireland

The EQUAL Community Initiative in Ireland is overseen by a Monitoring Committee. The member organisations of this committee are listed below.

⁵ This means that this Evaluation is not a "mid-term" one in the sense of being undertaken at the mid point of the EQUAL Programme in Ireland. The fact that EQUAL was launched in mid-2001 in all Member States means that, while the Evaluation is undertaken mid-way through the 2000-06 period, most of the implementation (and over 75% of the expenditure) of EQUAL are still to take place.

TABLE 1.4 MEMBERSHIP OF EQUAL MONITORING COMMITTEE	
Government Departments	Other Organisations
Enterprise, Trade and Employment Education and Science Agriculture and Food Social and Family Affairs Environment and Local Government Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Justice, Equality and Law Reform Finance	Technical Support Structure Equality Authority Irish Business and Employers Confederation Irish Congress of Trade Unions National Disability Authority Voluntary and Community Sector Platform Chambers of Commerce in Ireland European Refugee Fund - Reception & Integration Agency FÁS Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association Small Firms Association Construction Industry Federation Special EU Programmes Body BMW and S&E Regional Assemblies Mid-West and Midlands Regional Authorities

As well as the organisations listed, the European Commission, the NDP/CSF Information Officer, the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit and the Gender Mainstreaming Unit of the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform sit on the Committee in an advisory capacity. A representative of Northern Ireland's Dept of Employment and Learning attends as an observer.

On a day-to-day basis, EQUAL is overseen by a designated Managing Authority - this role is undertaken by the Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Managing Authority has appointed, through a tendering process, a Technical Support Structure (TSS) to assist in its work. The function of Paying Authority is undertaken by a separate section (the ESF Policy and Operations Unit) of the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Other organisations involved in the implementation of EQUAL in Ireland, and other structures established are:

- the Special EU Programmes Body has a specific role in promoting cross-border co-operation under all EU Community Initiatives (see Chapter 3);
- the Equality Authority has a specific role as regards mainstreaming, both in the Republic of Ireland and (through co-operation with its Northern Ireland counterpart) on an all-island basis;
- Thematic Networks (groups of projects) have been formed to bring the DPs together to facilitate and strengthen the mainstreaming process;
- a national Mainstreaming Group has been formed to provide a bridge for learning arising from EQUAL to transfer to the policy domain.

1.2.3 Round 1 EQUAL Projects in Ireland

Some 21 projects are being funded under Round 1 of EQUAL, as listed in Table 1.5. Of these, ten fall under the Employability pillar, three under the Entrepreneurship pillar, five under the Adaptability pillar, two under the Equal Opportunities pillar with one project relating to asylum seekers.

TABLE 1.5 EQUAL PROJECTS IN IRELAND, 2001-04		
DP Name	Project Title	Brief Description of Objectives
Employability Access Ability	Access Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of recruitment processes that will be more inclusive for people with disabilities Work with HR sector and people with disabilities to ensure successful dissemination of such processes
Blanchardstown EQUAL DP	Blanchardstown EQUAL Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with six marginalised groups in Blanchardstown to move them towards the labour market Developing new systems in health service organisations to improve co-ordination of services to drug users in rehabilitation Working with employers in Blanchardstown to improve practices as regards equality and diversity
North East Training Initiative	EQUAL North East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with long-term unemployed men and women to develop flexible, intensive models for reintegration to the work force Develop accreditation for training, working with training institutes Ensure employers have flexibility and knowledge to respond to the needs of disadvantaged groups
Work Integration Network (WIN)	Work and Income through Development and Partnership (WIDE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of training modules for a range of long-term unemployed groups, including ex-prisoners, refugees, drug abusers and others in Dublin's inner city
Kildare Wicklow EQUAL	Kildare Wicklow EQUAL Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with young people and women in urban areas, and farm families in rural areas, to support labour market integration Using Community IT Centres in Wicklow to disseminate training information Work with employers on equality/diversity training and job placements
Laois Rural Employment Partnership	Laois Rural Employment Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with low-income farm families to identify other sources of employment and income Work with employers to raise awareness of this target group
Roscommon Partnership Development Company	ROS EQUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with employers and agencies concerned with disability to improve awareness of, and services to, people with disabilities as regards the labour market Establish a community radio station to support the above

TABLE 1.5 EQUAL PROJECTS IN IRELAND, 2001-04

		aims
North Cork/ South East Limerick DP	Rural Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empowerment of those furthest from the labour market in terms of seeking work ▪ Working with employers and agencies to address structural barriers
Clare Equality Partnership	Trasna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design and deliver life-long learning training modules for six identified target groups ▪ Develop an equality network for County Clare
Westmeath EQUAL DP	Employment Bridging Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with employers, agencies and people outside the workforce to develop pathways to employment ▪ Facilitation of self-advocacy for groups outside the workforce
Entrepreneurship		
Leitrim Partnership for Arts and Crafts Employment	Craft as a Source of Employment (CASE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support people in selected target groups to become self-employed and self-reliant artists and craftspeople ▪ Identify market opportunities for art or craft producers in Leitrim
Traveller Economy Sectoral Partnership	Pavee Feens Hawken (Traveller Men Working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot projects in four areas, working with Traveller men ▪ Raise awareness among the target group of the value of participation in the labour market ▪ Work with mainstream agencies to ensure enterprise supports are inclusive of the Travelling community
Longford Women in Enterprise	Supporting Women Entrepreneurs in Longford (SWELL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and overcome reasons for low entrepreneurship among women in Longford ▪ Develop a web of supports for women starting a business ▪ Provide "Start Your Own Business" and other relevant training to participants
Adaptability		
Diversity at Work Network (DAWN)	Promoting Racism Awareness, Inter-Culturalism and Diversity in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a network including employers, employees and voluntary groups working with ethnic workers ▪ Work with employers to develop appropriate workplace structures and policies ▪ Deliver a training of trainers course to businesses
EQUAL Ireland	EQUAL Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint social partner approach to upskill those in low-paid employment and support those outside the workforce ▪ Specific tasks include a workplace Foundation Access Programme, a Job Rotation programme, a system of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL) and development of outreach centres
Dublin Employment Pact	Equal at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work in public, private and community/voluntary sectors to change HR policies and practices to promote inclusiveness and equality ▪ Re-engineering of recruitment processes in two local authorities to move to a competence-based recruitment system ▪ Piloting of a Job Rotation model with private companies ▪ Development of good practice model of HR for community

TABLE 1.5 EQUAL PROJECTS IN IRELAND, 2001-04

and voluntary sector		
INTERACT	Managing Diversity in a Multi-Cultural Work Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on food processing, hotel, catering and health care sectors ▪ Survey of organisations in these sectors ▪ Development of training programmes to support good integration, targeted both at organisations and ethnic workers
Trainers Network	Training Responses to address Equality and Diversity (TRED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of a training module relating to equality and diversity, with associated accreditation ▪ Pilot the training module ▪ Develop workplace tools to analyse equality and diversity practices
Equal Opportunities		
National Flexi-Work Partnership	Promoting Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National survey of 1,000 people on work-life balance issues ▪ Development of innovative family-friendly policies ▪ Particular focus on older people and people with learning disabilities
Work-Life Balance Network (WLBN)	Promoting Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with a number of large companies (e.g. An Post, Eircom) undergoing change to develop awareness of Work-Life Balance issues and to implement new structures and processes in this regard
Asylum Seekers		
SONAS Ireland	SONAS EQUAL Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information for asylum seekers on asylum determination process ▪ Support target group in interfacing with the process, and with local communities ▪ Provide psychological and cultural support ▪ Identify good practice in other countries relevant to Ireland

SOURCE: EQUAL PROJECT DIRECTORY⁶

Table 1.5 shows that the ten employability projects cover both urban and rural areas. Three are focused on specific target groups, two on people with disabilities and one on low-income farm families. All three of the Entrepreneurship projects are focused – one by sector (crafts) and two by target group (Travellers and women). Of the five Adaptability projects, two focus on the integration of ethnic workers. The two Equal Opportunities projects approach the issue of work-life balance in different ways and the asylum seekers project pilots a number of interventions for this target group.

⁶ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2002), EQUAL Project Directory

1.3 Evaluation Objectives

Section 7 of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation of EQUAL in Ireland sets out the issues to be addressed by the First Interim Evaluation and the Mid-term Evaluation.

TABLE 1.6 REQUIRED FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

"The evaluations will focus, as appropriate, on the following issues:

- i) The labour market context of EQUAL, especially the inequality issues that EQUAL will address. This will include how it relates to the National Employment Action Plans (NEAPs) and the European Employment Strategy
- ii) The implementation and delivery of EQUAL. This will include:
 - The setting up of DPs
 - Selection of DPs and what type of organisations took part;
 - The role of the National Support Structure in monitoring and supporting DPs
 - Analysis of the dynamics of DPs
 - The effectiveness of the monitoring system
- iii) Achieving Outcomes – this will be an analysis of how well EQUAL has met the targets outlined in the CIP. Monitoring indicators for EQUAL have been agreed and are laid out in the CIP. Monitoring data will be collected via application forms although some will be collated as part of the evaluation and via routine monitoring visits made by the EQUAL Technical Support Structure
- iv) Thematic Evaluation – this will focus on assessing the effectiveness of the key principles of EQUAL:
 - Partnership
 - Transnationality
 - Innovation
 - Equality⁷
 - Empowerment
 - Mainstreaming
- v) Impact of EQUAL – this will analyse:
 - What effect did EQUAL have on national/local/sectoral policy?
 - What effect did EQUAL have on individuals?
 - What effect did EQUAL have on companies?
 - The effectiveness of the EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group?"

SOURCE: TERMS OF REFERENCE, SECTION 7

Section 8 of the Terms of Reference provides further specific questions to be addressed in relation to the different principles of EQUAL (as set out in point (iv) above) and topics to be covered by the Mid-term Evaluation.

1.4 Evaluation Method

Research for the Mid-term Evaluation was undertaken between late-July 2003 and early-September 2003.

Key elements of the research were:

⁷ While not a formal principle of EQUAL, equality has been added as a principle to be reviewed in an Irish context

- discussions of progress to date with the Managing Authority and the Technical Support Structure;
- review of extensive documentation relating to the programme in Ireland, including reports prepared for the Monitoring Committee, and documentation relating to the thematic networks and the National Mainstreaming Policy Group;
- discussions with other actors relating to the programme, including the Equality Authority and the European Commission;
- review of data relating to the changing labour market in Ireland;
- a survey of the DPs funded under Round 1 of EQUAL in Ireland. All 21 DPs were contacted and completed questionnaires were received from 18 of the 21 within the timeframe for the Evaluation. A copy of the questionnaire used in the survey is attached as Annex 2;
- in the case of seven DPs, the survey was supplemented by visits to the DP. These visits (four in Dublin and three outside Dublin) allowed for more in-depth discussion with the DPs on their answers, as well as giving a more practical sense of progress "on-the-ground" in terms of implementation.

1.5 Report Structure

The structure of the Evaluation report follows closely the focus of the Evaluation as required by the Terms of Reference (and as set out in Table 1.6). Specific issues required to be addressed are addressed through this structure.

Chapter 2 reviews the labour market context in which EQUAL operates in Ireland. It sets out the labour market context as it existed when the CIP was prepared and the logic of how this labour market context led to potential activities/areas being identified for EQUAL funding. It reviews how the labour market has evolved since then, relevant changes in the legislative and policy context, and asks how these changes impact on EQUAL.

Chapter 3 reviews the implementation and delivery of EQUAL from its launch in mid-2001 to mid-2003. It briefly reviews the selection of DPs and the administration of Action 1⁸, before reviewing in more detail the administration to date of Action 2, the financial monitoring and performance indicators systems and the level of co-operation achieved with Northern Ireland. The progress achieved to date by the DPs in implementing their projects is also reviewed, with available data on expenditure and outputs presented.

Chapter 4 examines how the key principles of EQUAL have been incorporated into implementation of the programme to date. It addresses four of the EQUAL principles in turn – partnership, transnationality,

innovation and empowerment. The thematic approach of EQUAL is addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 (how the labour market context supported the identification of areas of funding under EQUAL and how this translated into projects chosen) and mainstreaming is addressed in Chapter 5. Questions from Section 1.8 of the Terms of Reference relating to specific EQUAL principles are addressed in Chapter 4.

⁸ These were reviewed in more detail in the First Interim Evaluation report of October 2002. This report is available at www.equal-ci.ie/res/ed.html

Chapter 5 analyses the limited impact to date and the mainstreaming potential of EQUAL. At a project level, it reviews emerging outputs and processes in place to facilitate horizontal mainstreaming. At a policy level, it reviews the processes in place to ensure the potential learning arising in the DPs for national and sectoral policy is realised through vertical mainstreaming.

The Terms of Reference required that a First Interim Evaluation be undertaken in Autumn 2002 and a report of this Evaluation was circulated to the Monitoring Committee in advance of its November 2002 meeting. This Interim Evaluation addressed a number of issues also addressed by the Mid-term Evaluation, but in less detail. As such, some parts of this Evaluation build on parts of the Interim Evaluation. Conclusions relating to issues that were fully addressed in the Interim Evaluation (such as the process of selecting projects for Round 1) are summarised in this Evaluation and recommendations of relevance to Round 2 of EQUAL in Ireland are repeated.

2. Labour Market Context of EQUAL

2.1 Overview

This chapter examines the labour market environment within which EQUAL was initially framed and has been implemented to date. Section 2.2 describes the labour market context within which the CIP was prepared, the challenges this posed for the programme and how the CIP addressed these challenges. Section 2.3 reviews labour market changes since then, and the outlook for labour market conditions. Section 2.4 examines data which have emerged since the CIP was prepared on a number of groups i.e. groups that tend to be excluded from the labour market. Section 2.5 describes relevant changes in national policy since EQUAL began, and Section 2.6 discusses the implications for EQUAL of these different changes in the labour market environment in recent years.

2.2 Labour Market Context in the Community Initiative Programme

2.2.1 Labour Market Context

The EQUAL CIP was prepared in late-2000 and finalised in early-2001. It contains three chapters that describe key facts and trends relating to Ireland's labour market and issues arising in relation to discrimination and inequality, both generally and in the context of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy. The CIP summarises the labour market situation at the time through the table below.

TABLE 2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND LABOUR MARKET VARIABLES AS SET OUT IN EQUAL CIP

	April 1994			Q2 1999			% change
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Demographics							
Population	1783.3	1802.2	3585.9	1859.1	1885.6	3744.7	4.4
Population under 15	462.2	436.3	898.5	425.6	403.5	829.2	-7.7
Population 15 and over	1321.1	1366.3	2687.4	1433.4	1482	2915.5	8.5
Working age population	1145.9	1132.8	2278.8	1251.6	1242.2	2493.8	9.4
Population 65 and over	175.2	233.5	408.6	181.9	239.9	421.7	3.2
Dependency Ratio (%)	55.6	59.1	57.4	48.5	51.8	50.2	-12.6
Labour Market							
Labour Force (15 and over)	898.1	533.5	1431.6	1006.7	681.4	1688.1	17.9
Participation rate (%)	68	39	53.3	70.2	46	57.9	8.6
Employment	766.3	454.3	1220.6	947.3	643.9	1591.1	30.4
Employment rate (%)	67%	40%	54%	76%	52%	64%	19.1
Unemployment	131.9	79.1	211	59.4	37.5	96.9	-54.1
Unemployment rate (%)	14.7	14.8	14.7	5.9	5.5	5.7	-61.2
Long-term unemployment	85.4	42.9	128.2	30.8	10.8	41.6	-67.6
LTU rate (%)	9.5	8	9	3.1	1.6	2.5	-72.2

Working Age Population = aged 15-64

Participation rate = number of people in the labour force expressed as a percentage of total population aged 15 and over

Dependency ratio = Population under 15 and over 65 as percentage of working age population

Employment rate = Number in employment as a percentage of working age population

Long-term Unemployment = unemployed for one year or more.

SOURCE: CIP FOR EQUAL IN IRELAND, 2000-06, DATA FROM CSO, LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (APRIL 1994) AND QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (Q2 1999)

The table, which drew on the latest labour market data available at the time, shows:

- high growth in employment (over 30%) in the 1994-99 period;
- rapid growth in female labour force participation (up 8%);
- a fall of half in unemployment and of two-thirds in long-term unemployment over the period.

2.2.2 Key Challenges

The CIP identifies labour shortages and skills shortages as the key challenges facing the Irish labour market and states: "In the medium-term, the continuing economic boom and unprecedented employment growth will continue to pose labour supply difficulties. Labour force data ... suggest a continuing tightening of the labour market ...".

The focus on labour and skills shortages was shared by a number of other reports at the time (some quoted in the CIP). The CIP goes on to identify how these challenges arise in the context of the four pillars:

- for employability, key issues are reaching out to groups not included in the live register data, but who might like to work (e.g. a proportion of women working in the home, older men, people with disabilities and Travellers), as well as supporting these groups through upskilling and life long education;
- for entrepreneurship, the issue is removing the barriers faced by certain groups in starting a business - women, members of the Travelling community and non-nationals are specifically cited;
- for adaptability, there is an emphasis on the need for companies to support their workers in upskilling and it is noted that part-time workers are often overlooked on in-company training. Workplace flexibility and family-friendly policies are cited as issues, particularly for women, older workers and people with disabilities. A lack of diversity and equality in the workplace is cited as being a barrier to various groups taking a full part in the labour force;
- for equal opportunities, a lack of childcare and the "fragmentation of childcare policy" are cited as reasons for the gender gap in employment, although progress in the 1990s in narrowing this gap is noted.

2.2.3 Addressing Key Challenges

Having explored these issues in more detail by target group, the CIP goes on to "translate" the issues into specific areas where EQUAL projects could probably contribute to innovation (for each pillar). It notes: "The CIP does not intend to set out actions and activities under EQUAL in a prescriptive fashion - that, in our view, would be the antithesis of innovation. Nevertheless, as a guide for potential Development Partnerships, there are actions and activities which have been suggested through the consultation process and within the context of the previous analyses and general labour market policies as outlined".

The CIP suggests 36 potential areas/activities in which it sees the potential for innovative EQUAL projects to emerge. These include nine potential areas/activities for employability; four for entrepreneurship; 13 for adaptability; four for equal opportunities and six relating to asylum seekers.

TABLE 2.2 AREAS/ACTIVITIES FOR EQUAL FUNDING SUGGESTED BY THE CIP

Employability

- Access to employment guidance and counselling services
- Evolution of mainstream services which are sensitive to the needs of discriminated groups
- Integrated interventions and supported progression outcomes for those most marginalised on the labour market
- Local/ sectoral approaches to identifying employment opportunities and preparing target groups for such opportunities
- Cross-sectoral interventions to develop new ways to retain young people at risk within the school system and to underpin their progression from school to work
- Measures that seek to change the nature of the labour market to one that recognises and accommodates diversity
- Reviewing and enhancing recruitment and selection criteria
- Measures to develop an accommodating workplace ethos
- Targeted pre-labour market programmes that facilitate access to mainstream skills training
- Mainstreaming of specific skills training that accommodates the needs of those that are facing barriers due to discrimination and realising of outcomes in terms of access to employment

Entrepreneurship

- Enterprise development supports for refugees and migrants who wish to set up their own business
- Measures to support access to self-employment and local and community access to finance initiatives for those that are labour market disadvantaged
- Mechanisms to promote equality of access to public self-employment programmes for categories currently under-represented on public programmes, including refugees and relevant asylum seekers
- Social partner involvement in developing mechanisms to support the establishment and development of enterprises including social type enterprises in disadvantaged urban and rural areas

Adaptability

- Initiatives targeted at those in employment and with low educational attainment
- These initiatives could include a confidence building component. The role of the employment service is key. The Local Employment Service offers in-work support to both the employee and employer after they have assisted someone in obtaining work. Services such as this could be available to all who are labour market disadvantaged
- Complementary accreditation systems, recognising prior learning, incorporating new forms of assessment and procedures for the recognition of qualifications attained outside the EU
- Company led proposals that extend and pilot work around the life-long and work-based learning concepts into SMEs
- Identification and development of further political and institutional arrangements to promote and deliver partnership at organisational and enterprise level requiring structures, systems and resources with the capacity to do so
- Support company led projects that implement integrated IT strategies, including development of ICT systems, requiring computer literacy training at all levels in the enterprise towards goal and/or context oriented innovations
- Initiatives to create more flexible workplaces
- Research on the adaptability needs of older people
- Developing job descriptions
- Supports to assist people who have experienced barriers in accessing employment to enable them to remain at work and to avail of training and career opportunities
- Development of diversity management strategies to create an inclusive workplace that values diversity
- In-work systems promoting mobility and opportunity for those in low-quality, low-paid or vulnerable employment
- Innovative ways in which IT is made available to all. Using existing networks of representative organisations, or places where marginalised groups already access IT, would be important in this regard

Equal Opportunities

- Address inequalities between women and men, specifically actions to facilitate the reconciliation of family and working life
- Innovative ways to address childcare and other care issues
- Opportunities for returning to work and new flexible ways of working for both sexes using ICTs and incorporating both employee and employer perspectives
- Awareness programmes for business on the promotion and benefits of family-friendly work policies

TABLE 2.2 AREAS/ACTIVITIES FOR EQUAL FUNDING SUGGESTED BY THE CIP

Asylum Seekers (Ideas subject to status and current government policy)

- Development and enhancement of services provided by Asylum Seekers Unit of FÁS
- Provision of culturally appropriate provision in active labour market policies, specifically with regard to language and specific models of work practice
- Provision of follow-up services for those placed in employment and/or training
- Harnessing and developing of entrepreneurial and other skills and competencies to assist towards integration and/or transition to employment whether on the domestic labour market or elsewhere
- Further research into addressing gaps and barriers in mainstream provision
- Provision of mechanisms for streamlining access to vocational or further education

SOURCE: EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND, CHAPTER 5

The CIP also sets out the proportion of EQUAL project funding to be allocated to each pillar (with the balance to be allocated to Technical Assistance):

- 45% for Employability;
- 10% for Entrepreneurship;
- 20% for Adaptability;
- 12% for Equal Opportunities;
- 5% for Asylum Seekers.

Given the labour market situation as it existed at the time, the choice of these specific areas and activities that EQUAL might fund seems to us to have been appropriate. Although a large number of areas are listed, they reflect the challenges that faced labour market participants and the socially excluded at the time. They also reflect policy thinking on the issues at end-2000/early-2001.

In comparing the areas identified as potential areas for funding (Table 2.2) and the projects selected under Round 1 (see Table 1.5), the following conclusions emerge:

- the best match of areas and projects occurred in the Employability pillar, with almost all of the areas identified in Table 2.2 being addressed through the pilot projects;
- the matching for the other pillars was more patchy. For example, while some of the entrepreneurial areas identified are addressed, the three projects are very specific and therefore address only some aspects of the issues in Table 2.2. The same is true on the Adaptability pillar, where diversity issues are well addressed but there is less focus on lifelong learning (the first four or five points in Table 2.2 all deal with this but only one pilot project addresses the area directly). This reflects the fact that projects emerge through applications and, as the CIP itself states, innovation cannot be imposed in top-down manner.

The list of areas in the CIP does raise an issue about the breakdown of funding as between pillars. Given that the single largest number of areas are suggested in relation to the Adaptability pillar, and perhaps in the context of the high level of change in the Irish labour market in the past decade, there is a case that the proportion of spend under the Adaptability pillar should be higher.

2.3 Labour Market Changes since 1999

2.3.1 Period from Mid-1999 to Mid-2001

Table 2.3 shows demographic and labour market trends from Q2 1999 to Q2 2001, i.e. updating the data in the CIP to the point where the Round 1 projects were chosen. Table 2.3 shows:

- further high employment and labour force growth over the period;
- further falls in the unemployment and long-term unemployment;
- increases in the labour force and employment rates, with proportionally larger increases for females.

TABLE 2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC AND LABOUR MARKET VARIABLES AS SET OUT IN EQUAL CIP							
	Q2 1999			Q2 2001			% change
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Demographics							
Population	1859.1	1885.6	3744.7	1907.4	1931.5	3838.9	2.5
Population under 15	425.6	403.5	829.2	421.6	400	821.6	-0.9
Population 15 and over	1433.4	1482	2915.5	1485.8	1531.5	3017.3	3.5
Working age population	1251.6	1242.2	2493.8	1299.9	1288.4	2588.3	3.8
Population 65 and over	181.9	239.9	421.6	185.9	243.1	429	1.8
Dependency Ratio (%)	48.5	51.8	50.2	46.7	49.9	48.3	-3.7
Labour Market							
Labour Force (15 and over)	1006.7	681.4	1,688.10	1053.7	728.1	1,781.90	5.5
Participation rate (%)	70.2	46	57.9	70.9	47.5	59.1	2.2
Employment	947.3	643.9	1591.1	1013.9	702.5	1716.5	7.9
Employment rate (%)	75.7	51.8	63.8	78.0	54.5	66.3	3.9
Unemployment	59.4	37.5	96.9	39.8	25.6	65.4	-32.5
Unemployment rate (%)	5.9	5.5	5.7	3.8	3.5	3.7	-35.1
Long-term unemployment	30.8	10.8	41.6	15.6	4.9	20.5	-50.1
LTU rate (%)	3.1	1.6	2.5	1.5	0.6	1.2	-1.3
Working Age Population = aged 15-64							
Participation rate = number of people in the labour force expressed as a percentage of total population aged 15 and over							
Dependency ratio = Population under 15 and over 65 as percentage of working age population							
Employment rate = Number in employment as a percentage of working age population							
Long-term Unemployment = unemployed for one year are more.							
SOURCE: CSO QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, Q2 1999 AND Q2 2001							

The labour market conditions up to mid-2001 suggest that EQUAL-funded activities continued to be appropriate and were if anything even more relevant by mid-2001 than when quoted in the CIP.

2.3.2 Period from Mid-2001 to Mid-2003

Table 2.4 shows demographic and labour market trends from Q2 2001 to Q2 2003. This period corresponded to the selection and first period of implementation of the Round 1 EQUAL projects. It also saw a downturn in world economic conditions. Table 2.4 shows that, during this period in Ireland, there was:

- an increase in the number employed;
- a simultaneous increase in the number unemployed;
- an increase in female labour force participation;
- increases in both the unemployment and long-term unemployment rates;
- a larger percentage increase in the general unemployment rate for males than for females.

	Q2 2001			Q2 2003			% change
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Demographics							
Population	1907.4	1931.5	3838.9	1962.7	1990.6	3953.3	3.0
Population under 15	421.6	400	821.6	425.4	404.1	829.5	1.0
Population 15 and over	1485.8	1531.5	3017.3	1537.3	1586.5	3123.8	3.5
Working age population	1299.9	1288.4	2588.3	1381.5	1352.2	2733.7	5.6
Population 65 and over	185.9	243.1	429	155.8	234.3	390.1	-9.1
Dependency Ratio (%)	46.7	49.9	48.3	42.1	47.2	44.6	-7.7
Labour Market							
Labour Force (15 and over)	1053.7	728.1	1,781.90	1080.6	779.1	1859.7	4.4
Participation rate (%)	70.9	47.5	59.1	70.3	49.1	59.5	0.7
Employment	1013.9	702.5	1716.5	1,029.2	749.1	1,778.3	3.6
Employment rate (%)	78.0	54.5	66.3	74.5	55.4	65.0	-2.0
Unemployment	39.8	25.6	65.4	51.4	30.0	81.4	24.5
Unemployment rate (%)	3.8	3.5	3.7	4.8	3.9	4.4	18.9
Long-term unemployment	15.6	4.9	20.5	19.7	7.2	26.9	31.2
LTU rate (%)	1.5	0.6	1.2	1.8	0.9	1.4	16.7
Working Age Population = aged 15-64							
Participation rate = number of people in the labour force expressed as a percentage of total population aged 15 and over							
Dependency ratio = Population under 15 and over 65 as percentage of working age population							
Employment rate = Number in employment as a percentage of working age population							
Long-term Unemployment = unemployed for one year or more.							
SOURCE: CSO QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, Q2 2001 AND Q2 2003							

While total employment between Q2 2001 and Q2 2003 increased by 3.6% (to 1,778,300), the period saw the number in part-time employment grow by 6% (to 302,000), compared to a 3% increase for those in full-time employment (to 1,476,300). Linked to the global economic slowdown, there was low private sector employment creation, and employment growth occurred mainly in the public sector i.e. in public administration, defence, education and health. Together these areas accounted for 77% of all jobs created, with the health sector of particular importance. In the private sector the largest increase in employment was in the Hotels and Restaurants.

This period experienced a reversal of some of the trends evident when the CIP was drawn up (e.g. unemployment and long-term unemployment now rising) but a continuation of others (e.g. overall employment and female labour force participation continuing to rise). The overall number unemployed had not however returned to the level experienced when the CIP was prepared (i.e. it was 84,100 in mid-2003 compared to 96,900 in mid-1999).

2.3.3 Labour Market Forecasts for 2004-06

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) forecasts that the Irish labour market will slow down in the second half of 2003 and into 2004. The number in employment is expected to rise by 1% in 2004 (to 1.8mn) with the unemployment rate forecast to be 5.7%, i.e. around 108,000 people. If this is the case, the rate will have risen above the rate which existed when the CIP was prepared.

TABLE 2.5: LABOUR MARKET TRENDS 2001-2004, 000'S (ANNUAL AVERAGES)				
	2001	2002	2003*	2004*
Labour Force	1,812	1,874	1,874	1,905
Employed	1,741	1,765	1,780	1,798
Unemployed	71	82	95	108
Unemployment Rate	3.9	4.4	5.0	5.7
Live Register	142	163	179	195
* Forecasts				
SOURCE: ESRI QUARTERLY ECONOMIC COMMENTARY SUMMER 2003				

The ESRI Medium Term review 2003-2010 provides a longer term forecast (and is therefore somewhat less reliable). It estimates that Irish unemployment will peak in 2005 at 5.7% and then gradually fall as the domestic and international economies recover, to a rate of 4.3% in 2010. The review (to 2010) also contains a number of other forecasts in relation to medium-term changes in the labour market:

- it predicts that total employment will increase by 263,000 between 2003 and 2010. Most of the increase will be in market services, particularly in "high skilled areas" including professional services and the health and education sectors. These areas are human capital intensive and require a skilled labour force;

- a decline in the number employed in the agriculture, building and traditional manufacturing industries is predicted. This will have a disproportionate effect on unskilled labour, although some of these workers may find jobs in the personal services sector, which is mainly low skilled;
- given that Ireland's workforce is beginning to age and the number of young people entering the labour force each year is falling, emerging skills will have to be met through continuing rather than initial training.

Another option is to bring people currently outside the labour market into the labour market. The FÁS annual report for 2002 (published in July 2003) stated that measures need to be implemented to increase the size of the workforce and pointed to four sources which could be targeted to meet any impending skills gap, namely:

- unemployed people;
- economically inactive people who are not unemployed;
- older employed people who are likely to leave the workforce;
- immigrants.

The rapid structural changes in the Irish labour market have perhaps slowed since 2001. As regards EQUAL, it appears that the underlying medium-term issues facing the labour market continue to be similar to those set out in the CIP. The ESRI and the recent FÁS report both point to a medium-term need to bring new people into the labour market. This issue is perhaps coming more to the fore over time, e.g. there is more mention now of encouraging older workers to remain longer in the labour force or older people not in the labour force to return to it. The medium-term importance of life-long learning, and the upskilling of low-skilled workers, is also underlined by the ESRI report. If low-skill jobs are likely to disappear and new jobs are in more skilled service areas, then many workers currently in low-skilled jobs will need to be re-trained to take advantage of the new opportunities.

In the shorter-term, which is likely to include 2004, and may include 2005 and 2006, there is more uncertainty. It is unclear when a turning point will be reached in the labour market, e.g. when unemployment will start to fall again. This will affect the "atmosphere" around EQUAL in 2004 and perhaps longer, and may reduce enthusiasm for mainstreaming. However, even the downturn in the labour market does not push the unemployment rate above the rate as originally set out in the CIP (the ESRI forecasts that unemployment will peak at 5.7% in 2005, this is the same rate quoted in the CIP from mid-1999). As EQUAL is focused on piloting projects that can bring about longer-term changes in the labour market, the challenge will be to continue to focus on the longer-term issues even during the period of the downturn.

2.4 New Information on Disadvantaged Groups and the Labour Market

An important component of EQUAL in Ireland is piloting programmes which tackle the exclusion of disadvantaged/socially excluded groups from the labour force. In some cases, new information has been published since 2000 which provides a clearer picture of these groups, and the issues they face in relation to the labour market. Some of this information is presented in the paragraphs below – further details are contained in Annex A.

Round 1 of EQUAL already funds a number of projects focussed specifically on groups that experience labour market barriers (see Table 1.5). Two projects are focussed on people with disabilities, one on Travellers, one on low-income farm families, two on ethnic workers and one on refugees. In addition, a number of the other Round 1 projects would deal with these groups as part of their general project work.

People with Disabilities

In Q2 2002 the Central Statistics Office (CSO) produced a special Quarterly National Household Survey entitled “Disability in the Labour Force” Over 10% (271,000) of all persons aged 15 to 64 indicated that they had a longstanding health problem or disability. Although people with disabilities constitute a significant proportion of the working age population, employment among this group is significantly lower than for the population as a whole. Just over 40% of people aged 15 to 64 with a disability/health problem were in employment. This compares to an overall employment rate of 65% for the same age category.

The Equality Authority commissioned a report in 2001 on the *Recruitment of People with Disabilities into Public Service*. The report found that while awareness actions in relation to disability were increasing, knowledge gaps remained about the capacity of people with disabilities to undertake a range of everyday jobs and occupations, while specific measures to attract or engage with people with disabilities were relatively undeveloped in the recruitment process.

Travellers

The census 2002 established that there are almost 24,000 members of the Traveller Community in Ireland. In relation to the labour market, a study commissioned by the Equality Studies Unit of the Equality Authority (also in 2002) concluded that Travellers are not identified as a potential audience for mainstream labour market programmes and that greater efforts are needed to promote access participation and outcomes for Travellers within both mainstream and targeted programmes. The research suggested that, to facilitate Travellers in participating adequately and fairly in mainstream programmes, a reasonable accommodation of their needs and culture at each stage of programme planning and provision should occur.

Older People

The Quarterly National Household Survey of Q2 2003 shows that the labour force participation rate of 60-64 year olds is considerably less than for people in general of working age, i.e. It is 40% compared to 60% in general. Labour market participation rates in all age groups are higher for males than for females. In the 60-64 age group, the participation rate is 56% for males, compared to 25% for females.

The Central Services Agency produced a report entitled *Labour Market Inequalities for Older People in Ireland* in 2002. The report highlighted a number of barriers faced by older people in relation to the labour market. These include:

- **lack of qualifications:** Employers emphasise formal qualifications rather than the actual skills and valuable experience held by older people;
- **perceived skills mismatch:** Employers perception that the skills and competencies of older people are out of touch with what is required in the modern economy;
- **access to training:** Both the suitability and cost of training currently available are seen as barriers;
- **availability/quality of jobs:** A lack of quality/suitable jobs its a disincentive to returning to work;
- **compulsory retirement age and pension arrangement:** These can act as structural barriers;
- **attitudinal barriers:** This concerns attitudes to older workers on the part of both younger people and employers.

Refugees

A 2002 report entitled *The Labour Market Needs and Experiences of Minority Ethnic groups, Particularly Refugees, in Ireland* identified a number of barriers to labour access market faced by refugees, including:

- lack of language skills;
- lack of information on employment and training services;
- lack of knowledge about the job search culture and the labour market;
- discrimination;
- employers' lack of understanding of legal status issues;
- non-recognition of qualifications obtained overseas.

Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals

The Equality Authority's report *Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals* states that many lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have experienced discrimination and prejudice at work, including experiences of hostility, exclusion and harassment, discrimination in relation to promotions and working conditions and in a number of cases dismissals, based solely because of their sexual orientation. The report cites GLEN/Nexus research of 101 lesbians and gay men, of which only 42 were employed.

Lone Parents

QHNS data show that there were 173,500 lone parents in Q2 2003. Of these, 44% were in employment, 3% were unemployed and over half 53% were not economically active. The 2001 NESF report "Lone Parents" identified a number of current barriers to lone parents entering the labour force including:

- lack of child care provision;
- lack of flexibility in the design and delivery of active labour market programmes by FÁS and other agencies; and
- a lack of family friendly policies.

While the information and studies coming on stream since 2000 do not identify new target groups, they do specify more clearly some of the problems faced by people in these target groups in accessing the mainstream labour market.

2.5 Policy Developments since 1999

2.5.1 Identified Policy Developments

There have been a number of national policy and programme developments since the CIP was prepared which are of relevance to the themes of discrimination and inequality in the labour market. Identified developments, and their main elements, are outlined in Table 2.6.

TABLE 2.6: KEY POLICY AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENTS RELEVANT TO EQUAL

Policy Development	Description of Key Elements
Stockholm and Lisbon European Councils - builds on European Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objective adopted of an employment rate of 67% by 2005 and 70% by 2010; a female employment rate of 57% by 2005 and more than 60% by 2010; and an employment rate of 50% for people aged 55-64 by 2010.
Social Economy programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Following the report of a Partnership 2000 Working Group, a Social Economy Programme was established under FÁS to support projects in disadvantaged areas providing services and creating local jobs
High Supports Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The "High Support Process" is aimed at people who have been working under the Jobs Initiative or Community Employment, but who may not be ready to make the transition to the open labour market. It offers enhanced supports to these people
National Anti-Poverty Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated in February 2002 as targets to reduce rates of unemployment outlined in the NAPS 1997 and 1999 already exceeded ▪ target now to eliminate long-term unemployment; ▪ further target to reduce the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007.
FÁS Statement of Strategy 2002-05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ emphasis on upskilling those in low-skilled jobs and on intervening earlier with those unemployed or disadvantaged;
Childcare Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ spending of over 100mn euro between 2000 and 2002 on childcare, supporting 26,900 places, of which 12,200 are new places
Community Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ changes to numbers on, and functioning of, Community Employment
Work Permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ changes to Ireland's work permit scheme in December 2001
Taxation Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reduced personal taxation in 2000 and 2001 budgets
Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'The State and citizens working in partnership should achieve: The skills, motivation, supports/tools, resources and time to engage in learning on a lifelong basis and thus enrich lives and develop a more prosperous, more inclusive society.'
Sustaining Progress: Social Partnership Agreement 2003-05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objectives for a fairer, more inclusive society and labour market participation.
Government decision to establish National Employment Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The LES should be assimilated under FÁS together with the FÁS Employment Service "as a discrete component of a more integrated dual-stranded national Employment Service".
National Spatial Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ defines balanced regional development as ensuring that areas reach their full potential ▪ strategy based around gateways and hubs in particular locations.
Responsibility from NRB to FÁS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ transfer of responsibility for vocational training and employment for people with disabilities from the National Rehabilitation Board to FÁS, as part of a "mainstreaming" of services
National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Second national plan, published in August 2003, following 2002 Copenhagen guidelines ▪ Reaffirms targets of eliminating long-term unemployment by (at latest) 2007, reducing unemployment among vulnerable groups towards national average by 2007, increasing female participation to over 60% by 2010 and increasing employment rates

In relation to the Stockholm and Lisbon targets set out in the above table:

- Ireland's employment rate was 74.5% in Q2 2003 (compared to an EU target of 67% in 2005 and 70% in 2010);
- Ireland's female employment rate was 55.4% in Q2 2003 (compared to EU targets of 57% and 60% by 2005 and 2010);
- the employment rate for people aged 55-64 in Ireland was 49% in Q2 2003, compared to an EU target of 50% by 2010.

Outputs and results from these policy developments may not be immediately forthcoming – the number of policy developments may reflect the rapid pace of change in Ireland’s labour market in the past decade. A number of policy developments were responding to this change, e.g. the investment in childcare and the thinking about life-long learning and spatial issues. In others, targets needed to be revised as they were overtaken by the strong economic growth experienced up to mid-2001.

2.5.2 National Employment Action Plan 2003

The EU Employment Guidelines for 2003-05 were approved by the European Council on 22 July 2003 and provided a basis for Ireland’s 2003-05 National Employment Action Plan, which was to be submitted to the European Commission at the start of October 2003.

The revised EU guidelines move away from the four pillars that had provided a framework for the previous National Employment Action Plans (and around which EQUAL is organised). Three objectives are now identified, following from the Lisbon agenda, with ten specific guidelines set out as to how the objectives are to be achieved. Across all ten of these, a gender mainstreaming approach is to be adopted.

TABLE 2.7 NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN 2003 - OBJECTIVES AND GUIDELINES
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full employment, meeting already agreed targets for the overall employment rate, the female employment rate and the employment rate for people aged 55-64; ▪ Improving quality and productivity at work; ▪ Strengthening social cohesion and inclusion <p>Specific Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active and preventative measures for the unemployed and inactive; ▪ Job creation and entrepreneurship; ▪ Address change and promote adaptability and mobility in the labour market; ▪ Promote development of human capital and life-long learning; ▪ Increase labour supply and promote active aging; ▪ Gender equality; ▪ Promote the integration of, and combat discrimination against, people at a disadvantage in the labour market; ▪ Make work pay through incentives to enhance work attractiveness; ▪ Transform undeclared work into regular employment; ▪ Address regional work disparities.
SOURCE: OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 05.08.2003

The text supporting the guidelines suggests specific strategies and mentions specific targets to be reached (for some guidelines), e.g:

- by 2010, 25% of long-term unemployed people should be participating in an active measure in the form of training, retraining, work practice or other employability measure;

- by 2005, job seekers throughout the EU should be able to consult all job vacancies advertised through Member States' employment services;
- by 2010, the EU average level of participation in life-long learning should be at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (25-64 age group);
- policies will aim to achieve by 2010 an increase by five years, at EU level, of the effective average exit age from the labour market (estimated at 59.9 years in 2001);
- policies will aim by 2010 to achieve a substantial reduction in the gender pay gap through a multi-faceted approach addressing the underlying factors of the gender pay gap;
- Member States should strive to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age;
- policies will aim to reduce the rate of early school leavers by 2010 to under 10%.

The National Employment Action Plan for 2003-05 was not available when this Evaluation was being prepared. However, the new structure, as well as the new or revised objectives, guidelines and targets will have implications for the framing of Ireland's medium-term labour market policies.

2.6 Implications for EQUAL

Sections 2.2 and 2.3 showed that, between mid-1994 and mid-2003, Ireland experienced a period of unprecedented labour market change. Over this nine-year period:

- the labour force increased from 1.43mn to 1.86mn;
- the number employed increased from 1.22mn to 1.78mn;
- the male participation rate rose from 68% to 70% and the female participation rate rose from 39% to 49%;
- unemployment fell from 211,000 to 81,400, with the rate down from 14.7% to 4.4%;
- long-term unemployment fell from 128,200 to 26,900, with the rate down from 9% to 1.4%.
- the nine year period included seven years of consistently strong employment growth and unemployment reductions, followed by two years (2001-03) when employment continued to rise but unemployment had also begun to rise again.

In this context, the major challenges facing the Irish labour market in 1999/2000 arose in the context of a potential shortage of labour supply and a tightening of the market. The potential areas where innovative projects might emerge, as identified in the EQUAL CIP, responded to this. This was an appropriate strategy.

The choice of projects best matched the specific areas of innovation suggested as necessary by the CIP under the Employability pillar. This was also the area to which most EQUAL funding (45% of the total) was

allocated. Some of the themes mentioned in the CIP were picked up by projects under the Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equal Opportunities pillars and for asylum seekers. As well as being affected by the level of funding available, only actual project ideas submitted as applications could be funded.

The ESRI's Medium-term Review of the Irish Economy (which was published in Summer 2003 and discusses the economy's prospects to 2010) forecasts that unemployment will peak in 2005 (at 5.7%, still relatively low by the standards of recent decades), before falling to 4.3% by 2010. It predicts a considerable move in the economy away from lower-skilled jobs and towards higher skilled service jobs in the coming years. It (and a recent FÁS study) also signal that the number of young people entering the Irish labour market each year has started to fall and there is a need to increase the emphasis on continuous training for people in employment and on mobilising people outside the labour force to enter the labour force.

The implication is that the issues set out in the EQUAL CIP in relation to these areas (life-long learning and mobilising/facilitating people to enter the labour force) continue to be relevant and, if anything, will become more important in the medium-term. Areas such as work-life balance, continuous training and up-skilling, flexible HR policies, integrating ethnic workers and mobilising groups such as older retired workers and women returners in general will continue to be relevant in Round 2 of EQUAL. While work continues to be needed to support particular target groups in (re)integrating into the labour market (as happens under what is now the Employability pillar), it may be appropriate to re-balance funding more towards areas that would fall under the Adaptability pillar for Round 2 of EQUAL. This is particularly the case if the EU target of 12.5% of the adult working age population in life-long learning is to be met.

In working with groups traditionally discriminated against in a labour market context, new research since 2000 has identified more clearly the barriers faced by a number of these groups. This research may also provide a basis for the identification of specific areas of potential innovation for Round 2. For example, the issue of increasing the proportion of 55-64 year olds in work is now very much on the European agenda but currently receives no specific funding in Ireland, either under the mainstream EHRD OP or under EQUAL. Yet a considerable pool of potential workers exists in that age group, or moving towards that age group.

From the summary of key changes in the Irish labour market, and policy developments since 2000, there has been considerable activity around labour market policy development in recent years, reflecting the pace of change in the labour market itself. The new EU Employment Guidelines also set out a new policy framework at EU level. These policy developments update the policy context in which Round 2 of EQUAL will operate.

In summary, the approach of the EQUAL CIP in 2000 appears to have been a valid and appropriate one, although the balance of funding could perhaps have been more heavily towards the Adaptability pillar. The fundamental issues facing the Irish labour market have not changed since then, despite what is forecast to be

a temporary increase in unemployment. If anything, the issues of life-long learning and mobilising new people to enter the labour force are even more important. This suggests that Round 2:

- should place more emphasis on funding for pilot projects around the up-skilling of low-skilled workers, life-long learning in general, flexible working and bringing new people into the labour market. This may include a focus on groups such as older workers (or older people who might enter the labour force), who would not normally be thought of as labour market disadvantaged;
- should draw on the new research around labour market disadvantaged groups to try to choose projects that attempt to pilot innovative ways to overcome identified barriers. For example, barriers identified include the recruitment processes facing people with disabilities and a lack of sensitivity to Traveller needs. As the Equality Authority has been closely involved in a number of these research projects, it is well placed to make an input to the preparation of Round 2 of EQUAL on these matters.

3. Implementation of EQUAL to Mid-2003

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 reviews the management and implementation of EQUAL up to August 2003 (excluding work around mainstreaming structures, which is reviewed in Chapter 5). Sections 3.2 and 3.3 review the selection of DPs in 2001 and the work of preparing detailed implementation plans during the Action 1 stage. These stages of EQUAL had been completed before the (Autumn 2002) First Interim Evaluation and this Evaluation contains an overview of the work undertaken over those periods, and our main conclusions from the First Interim Evaluation. Section 3.4 sets out the progress made by the 21 DPs to mid-2003, and Section 3.5 reviews the general administration of Action 2 (implementation phase) to date. Section 3.6 addresses the specific area of EQUAL's financial administration and Section 3.7 reviews the North-South dimension of the programme.

3.2 Selection of DPs

Some 62 applications for funding were received under the first round of EQUAL by the closing date of 07 September 2001. These were distributed by pillar into 32 under Employability (52%); six under Entrepreneurship (10%); 19 under Adaptability (31%) and four under Equal Opportunities (6%). There was one project under the Asylum Seekers theme.

There followed a process of evaluating these applications, leading to the selection of 21 projects for funding by 15 November 2001. This process involved:

- a detailed assessment of each application by the Technical Support Structure (TSS), which prepared a written report on each one, and ranked each in one of three categories (depending on its merits relative to the funding criteria);
- submission of all applications, and assessments, to the 15 members of the Selection Committee;
- discussion of applications by the Selection Committee and subsequent decisions.

Having reviewed a sample of technical assessments (relating to both successful and unsuccessful applications) for the First Interim Evaluation, they appeared to be comprehensive and fair. A considerable amount of work was undertaken by the TSS in this regard, which facilitated the work of the Selection

Committee. Having discussed the overall selection process with a number of people involved in the process, including applicants, we believe that the overall selection process was both rigorous and transparent.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the proportion of funding by pillar was set in the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP). While this limits the flexibility of the Selection Committee, it is not necessarily inappropriate, as it may steer the choice of projects to the policy areas where innovation is most needed. Chapter 2 argued that, from a labour market perspective (based on the potential areas for funding outlined in the CIP itself), there was a case that the Adaptability pillar was under-represented in Round 1. The data from the selection process show that the pillar had 31% of applications, while limited to 20% of funding.

In the context of the selection process having worked well for Round 1, potential improvements identified for Round 2 relate to:

- looking again at the proportion of funding by pillar (as discussed in Chapter 2);
- giving perhaps some flexibility to the Selection Committee in this regard also, if this is possible, e.g. to have bands for funding by pillar rather than fixed proportions;
- build the list of actions/activities identified in the CIP (as areas of possible interest from a policy innovation perspective) more formally into the selection process.

3.3 Administration of Action 1

Action 1 ran from mid-November 2001 to mid-May 2002 and involved three specific outputs from each Development Partnership:

- a detailed project plan, setting out how the approved project would be implemented;
- a transnational agreement (signed also by each DP's overseas partners);
- a formal local Development Partnership agreement.

The total funding offered to projects under Action 1 was €0.8mn, of which €0.63mn was drawn down. The amounts drawn down by project varied from €6,900 (Clare Equality Partnership) to €45,900 (Work Integration Network).

While some discussions on DP budgets continued into Summer 2002, the DPs had submitted detailed draft implementation plans by May 2002. In our view, the Action 1 process, which did not exist in 1994-99 for EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT, served a useful purpose and strengthened projects considerably. The plans at the end of Action 1 were much more detailed than in the Application phase, and had (in most cases) forced

projects to think through the details of implementation. A positive side effect was a consolidation of DP relationships. (These are further discussed in Chapter 4.)

The TSS undertook a range of actions to support the DPs in this phase of their work, including holding an Induction Day and a separate Working Meeting for all DPs, producing a detailed Project Planning and Operations Manual, meeting each DP on at least two occasions and providing written feedback on the draft plans. These actions took considerable time and, together with the supportive role of the TSS, will enhance the ultimate outputs of the projects and the Initiative.

For Round 2, we think that project budgets should be set at the start of Action 1, rather than after the Action 1 plans are submitted. In Round 1, the budgets in the plans submitted at the end of Action 1 were still considerably higher than the total budget available and this generated extra work for the TSS and for the projects. Setting the budgets in advance (with perhaps a +/- 5% margin for change) would save DP and TSS time and ensure realistic expectations from the outset.

The Action 1 work could also include a greater focus on indicators (hard and "soft") at the level of the DPs. While data on some hard indicators (numbers of participants, number of training modules developed etc.) tend to be generated for the quarterly returns, others (not required for returns) and soft indicators (measuring "distance travelled" by participants towards the labour market, for example) tend not to be used. It may be possible to increase the emphasis on this in Action 1, or at least to leave DPs with this as a defined early task for Action 2.

A further recommendation, arising from a preventative audit undertaken on EQUAL in Ireland by the European Commission in July 2003 is to reduce the timeframe for DP reporting on the closure of Action 1.

3.4 Progress to Date under Action 2

3.4.1 Overview of Action 2

Action 2 is the period during when the pilot projects being funded under EQUAL are implemented. It began formally in May 2002 and, for most projects, runs until the second half of 2004 or early-2005. It overlaps with Action 3, which deals with the work of DPs in relation to thematic networking, dissemination of good practice and making an impact on national policy.

Table 3.1 shows the amount of funding allocated under Actions 2 and 3 of EQUAL (Round 1) in Ireland.

TABLE 3.1 EQUAL ACTIONS 2 AND 3 - BUDGET ALLOCATIONS (ROUND 1)			
Action 2	ESF Allocation €14,218,787	Match Funds €4,739,603	Total €18,958,390
Action 3	€1,686,899	€563,663	€2,250,562
SOURCE: TSS PROGRESS REPORT TO MONITORING COMMITTEE, JULY 2003			

3.4.2 Progress to end-2002

DPs were issued with an Action 2 letter of offer from the Managing Authority (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment) in June 2002 and an Action 3 letter of offer at end-August 2002. These were issued following approval by the Selection Committee and decisions on DP budgets.

Progress in the second half of 2002 was mixed and the TSS report to the Monitoring Committee in July 2003 noted that several projects "experienced significant delays in effectively getting under way", citing Kildare-Wicklow, Blanchardstown, Westmeath and Clare as examples. The NSS cites a number of reasons for this:

- the complexity of the programme;
- gaining real buy-in from partners who are asked to commit match funding going forward (this appears to have been a particular issue for local development organisations under the Employability pillar);
- staff changes or a lack of qualified staff.

At least some delays were inevitable, e.g. decisions to recruit staff could not be taken until after the formal letters of approval were received, and the process then had built-in lead times. However, while many DPs did begin implementation fairly quickly, a minority did not. DPs should perhaps be asked to include a short-term (say for the first three months) week-by-week action plan in their Action 1 plan for Round 2 of EQUAL, to reduce these delays. Given the relatively short timeframe for EQUAL projects in general, loss of even a few months can impact negatively on a project's ultimate outputs. The need to make efforts to avoid "slippage" on implementation timeframes should be emphasised to DPs during Action 1.

As referred to above, a European Commission audit in July 2003 recommended a shorter period of closure for Action 1 under Round 2. The completion of Action 1 was another factor that took DP time in the first six months or so of Action 2, and this change would force projects to complete Action 1 earlier and free personnel for implementation work.

The relatively slow start-up of some DPs is reflected in the spend for 2002 under Actions 2 and 3. The expenditure figures for 2002 shown are preliminary as audited information was not available for all projects.

TABLE 3.2 EQUAL ACTIONS 2 AND 3 – BUDGET ALLOCATIONS 2002-2004 AND PRELIMINARY EXPENDITURE 2002

Action 2	ESF	Match Funds	Total
Total Allocation	€14,218,787	€4,739,603	€18,958,390
Expenditure 2002	€1,326,309	€505,371	€1,828,680
% of Total Allocation			9.6%
Action 3			
Total Allocation	€1,686,899	€563,663	€2,250,562
Expenditure 2002	€82,272	€18,251	€100,523
% of Total Allocation			4.5%

SOURCE: TSS Progress Report to Monitoring Committee, July 2003

Table 3.2 indicates that under 10% of the Action 2 funding was spent in 2002. A breakdown of the preliminary data for 2002 Action 2 and Action 3 combined expenditure by pillar indicates that:

- some €590,000 was spent in the Employability pillar (31% of total);
- some €329,000 was spent in the Entrepreneurship pillar (17% of total);
- some €732,000 was spent in the Adaptability pillar (38% of total);
- some €237,000 was spent by the Equal Opportunities pillar (12% of total);
- some €41,000 was spent by the Asylum Seekers project (2% of total).

Partly as a reflection of the relatively slow start-up, some two-thirds of 2002 expenditure was on administration and overheads, with a further 14% spent on trainers, 8% on premises, equipment and materials, 8% on transnational work and only 1% on participants. Some 129 participants⁹ were involved in EQUAL in 2002 (of whom 78% were under the Employability pillar). This is a relatively small number and the TSS Progress Report notes that the focus of EQUAL is not necessarily on participants, as projects may be trying to innovative around systems and practices. However, that said, it expects the number of participants to rise significantly in 2003.

The recruitment of project managers and other project staff was referred to above, and was a main focus of DP activity in the second half of 2002. From our telephone discussions with the DPs, and particularly from the case studies, a theme emerging was the crucial nature of these recruitment decisions. A well-organised project manager, who can work well with the DP partners, get (and keep) the project moving and can see the bigger (mainstreaming) picture, is a key criterion of a successful EQUAL project. If the above skills cannot be found in one person, some DPs use more than one person (e.g. someone from a DP organisation seconded part-time) to bring the extra required skills to the project. However, a number of people from DPs admitted to the Evaluator that they had initially made poor recruitment decisions, and this retarded progress. In some cases, new people have now replaced the original person. A useful input from the TSS in Round 2 may be to

⁹ This figures updates the figure presented to the Monitoring Committee at end-July 2003

emphasise how important these decisions are, and perhaps to provide some information on the skills a good EQUAL project manager needs.

3.4.3 Progress of DPs by Summer 2003

While data was not yet available for 2003 when this Evaluation was undertaken, the survey of DPs undertaken for the Evaluation indicated that, by Summer 2003, implementation activity under almost all 21 EQUAL projects were well under way. Expenditure data from a number of project for Quarter 1 2003 supported this view.

Table 3.3 summarises the key achievements of the DPs to date. It reflects the wide variety of projects as set out in Table 1.5.

TABLE 3.3 KEY POINTS OF PROGRESS OF EQUAL PROJECTS IN IRELAND BY MID-2003		
DP Name	Project Title	Brief Description of Achievements
Employability Access Ability	Access Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designed services to employers ▪ Refined services into four phase plan which is being implemented. ▪ Contact with employers who agreed to co-operate ▪ Built database of people with disability and special needs, employers and training providers
Blanchardstown EQUAL DP	Blanchardstown EQUAL Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detailed plans developed for seven local labour market disadvantaged groups ▪ Developing new inter-agency protocols to support pathways to labour market for drug users ▪ Research undertaken with employers - network now established
North East Training Initiative	EQUAL North East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47 participants recruited and being trained ▪ Benchmarked numeracy/literacy, Personality profiling ▪ 70% placement progression ▪ Website established ▪ 2 of 3 Focus Groups established
Work Integration Network (WIN)	Work and Income through Development and Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with immigrants, ex-prisoners, Travellers, ex-addicts and inner-city local authority tenants ▪ Training needs analysis undertaken by trainers and researcher – including involvement by ex-drug user researchers
Kildare Wicklow EQUAL	Kildare Wicklow EQUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One programme in place for low income farm families. ▪ Four others to start Sept/Oct 2003 and one in Jan 04 ▪ Certification programme for managers of community IT centres due to be completed in September 2003
Laois Rural	Laois Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot Jobs Club for people not in receipt of UA/UB

TABLE 3.3 KEY POINTS OF PROGRESS OF EQUAL PROJECTS IN IRELAND BY MID-2003		
Employment Partnership	Employment Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First training course completed by 12 people - ongoing support. Second course underway ▪ Rural Development Officer calling farmers ▪ Ran Special Needs Assistants course
Roscommon Partnership Development Company	ROS Equal	<p>All aspects up and running, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career Guidance ▪ Employment Marketing ▪ Community Radio Station
North Cork/South East Limerick DP	Rural Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitators for 3 target groups, hosted by partners ▪ Facilitators working one-to-one with 63 clients on progression ▪ Engaging with employers ▪ Training of clients
Clare Equality Partnership	Trasna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Three pilot projects established, targeted at women, Travellers and refugees/asylum seekers ▪ Local dissemination and contribution to TUI newsletter ▪ Tendering for production of a video and provision of Equality and Diversity training
Westmeath EQUAL DP	Employment Bridging Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structure in place and actions starting (staff recruited April 2003) ▪ Work started with disadvantaged groups ▪ Consultant being selected for Equality Mark.
Entrepreneurship Leitrim Partnership for Arts and Crafts Employment	Craft as a Source of Employment (CASE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targets met to date. ▪ First nine-month training course completed by nine people - some have started own businesses ▪ Second course about to start.
Traveller Economy Sectoral Partnership	Pavee Feens Hawken (Traveller Men Working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two pilot projects underway with 23 participants. Third due to start Sept. 03 ▪ Three project development workshops held, one planned. ▪ Newsletter published and video commissioned.
Longford Women in Enterprise	Supporting Women Entrepreneurs in Longford (SWELL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One group trained and being mentored. ▪ FETEC Start Your Own Business module changed to suit non school use. ▪ Pre vocational training for disadvantaged women
Adaptability Diversity at Work Network (DAWN)	Promoting Racism Awareness, Inter-Culturalism and Diversity in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed training module on Diversity in Workplace. ▪ Commissioned research on EU legislation on Diversity in Workplace ▪ Preparing handbook and developing training programme for employers on diversity in workplace. ▪ Set up network of businesses on these topics
EQUAL Ireland	EQUAL Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design of new open distance learning third level access programme ▪ 227 participants identified, of whom 143 had begun programme by mid-2003

TABLE 3.3 KEY POINTS OF PROGRESS OF EQUAL PROJECTS IN IRELAND BY MID-2003

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding achieved under In-Company training programme to part-fund Job Rotation and Accreditation of Prior Learning
Dublin Employment Pact	Equal at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One job rotation completed (9 trainees), another planned for Autumn 2003 • Job audits being undertaken in two local authorities as first step to re-engineer recruitment. First results by November 2003 • New induction training emphasising LLL options in Dublin City Council – provided to 60 employees • Course for Medical Secretaries in Tallaght Hospital – 10 participants • Two pieces of research on HR practices in community and voluntary sector • Equality and Diversity group, with Equality Authority and TSS representatives
INTERACT	Managing Diversity in a Multi-Cultural Work Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research carried out, including transnational element ▪ Coordinator in place for pilot programmes, linked to partners ▪ Three pilot programmes planned, two piloted already.
Trainers Network	Training Responses to address Equality and Diversity (TRED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed Foundation Diploma Training Programme for Managing Equality & Diversity in the Workplace – starting NUIG Sept 03 with 20 trainees ▪ Research of content and focus groups of employers and beneficiaries as inputs to design of training programme
Equal Opportunities		
National Flexi-Work Partnership	Promoting Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot project with employers underway with evaluation ▪ Employer working group established ▪ Advisory committee on mental health established
Work-Life Balance Network (WLBN)	Promoting Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structures and groups set up in six organisations ▪ Literature Review and Diagnostic Tool developed. ▪ Diagnostic check lists developed ▪ 10 case studies of practice. Validating in working groups ▪ Tender being prepared for training element
Asylum Seekers SONAS Ireland	SONAS EQUAL Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff in place including five trained outreach workers in five centres ▪ Policy sub committee set up ▪ Outreach to 785 clients ▪ Published and distributed resource material ▪ Have set up confidential data base on clients.

SOURCE: FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATES, SURVEY OF PROJECTS, AUGUST 2003

Table 3.3 does not cover transnational activities, which are discussed in Chapter 4 or mainstreaming activities, which are discussed in Chapter 5. It also does not list project launches, which have been undertaken by most of the DPs. However, from what it does include, it is clear that, after the slowish start to activity in the second half of 2002, activity picked up significantly in the first half of 2003. This was confirmed by our case study visits.

The TSS report to the July 2003 Monitoring Committee draws attention to the Kildare-Wicklow project. It states: "This project suffered extreme delays due to changes in personnel and associated difficulties in securing actual commitments in respect of match funding. The project has yet to sign a contract with the Managing Authority; however, revised budgets and plans have recently been drawn up and we are in discussion with the promoters in this regard". Albeit with a reduced budget, the Managing Authority and the TSS were confident that this project could still deliver an innovative pilot project.

3.5 Administration of Action 2

3.5.1 General Administration

The administration of Action 2 is overseen by the Managing Authority and managed on a day-to-day basis by the Technical Support Structure. The main tasks since Action 2 began have been:

- agreeing of revised Action 2 plans given final budgets (project by project discussions);
- closure of Action 1;
- quarterly collection of financial and other monitoring information from projects, and submission of this data to the Managing Authority;
- visits to projects (each project is met on a one-to-one basis several times a year, including at least one meeting with the dedicated TSS financial person);
- work with projects lagging behind;
- ongoing development of EQUAL website for Ireland (www.equal-ci.ie);
- preparation of online quarterly newsletter (three had been prepared by September 2003);
- work under Action 3 in relation to the thematic groups and the national and EU mainstreaming structures (discussed in Chapter 5).

Most of the day-to-day administrative tasks for EQUAL are undertaken by the Technical Support Structure. To gauge the views of the DPs on the TSS, the survey of DPs undertaken for the Evaluation asked each DP: "On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being poor and 4 being excellent), how would you rate the performance of the Technical Support Structure (WRC) to date?".

Of the 19 completed questionnaires received, the answers broke down as follows:

- four DPs gave the TSS a score of 4 (full marks);
- one DP gave the TSS a score of 3.5;
- 11 DPs gave the TSS a score of 3;
- two DPs gave the TSS a score of 2;
- one DP gave the TSS a score of 1.5.

The average score given was 3.05, which indicates a generally high level of satisfaction on the part of the DPs with the TSS.

Consistent reasons given for high scores were the flexibility and responsiveness of the TSS, which is perceived to react quickly to project issues, and to do so in a helpful manner. Its advice and support was also generally rated highly, as was the new financial support person recruited at start-2003 (see below). One project commented that its experiences of the Irish TSS compared well with the experiences of the project's transnational partners with the Support Structures in their respective countries.

The two principle complaints related to the financial advice before a dedicated person was recruited by the TSS and the amount of monitoring information, the latter being essentially an EU-wide issue and not something the TSS can influence. Two projects wanted better prior notification of events and three wanted the TSS to organise more meetings where DPs get together (inter-DP contact may increase from mid-2003 in any case as part of the thematic workshops – see Chapter 5).

3.5.2 Performance Indicators

The measure overviews attached to the Programme Complement for EQUAL contain indicative indicators for the Programme, with specific indicators for each of the six EQUAL themes operating in Ireland. The indicators are presented in the categories "Output", "Result" and "Impact", following the EU Structural Funds headings. They are also presented with the caveats that, as EQUAL is a bottom-up programme, finalising of the indicators would need to await the choice of projects, and the fact that the project-driven nature of EQUAL would make impact particularly difficult to measure. The indicative indicators as outlined are attached as an annex to this Evaluation.

To date (by August 2003), indicators have not been developed for the programme. Having said that, all of the information listed under the "Outputs" heading in the indicative indicators is being collected and much of the information under the "Results" heading is being collected. This is being done through the normal quarterly returns process.

In keeping with EU good practice, further work is needed on performance indicators. This is needed not for monitoring purposes but to fully describe the achievements of EQUAL. It arises at two levels:

- at a project level, a small number of further indicators by project would serve to ensure that the principal project results and impacts are captured in a quantitative way (insofar as they can be);
- at a thematic level, it may be possible to develop (at least some) common performance indicators that capture outputs, results and impacts by theme.

Given that the focus for new indicators at a project level should be on results and impacts, the thematic groups provide an opportunity for explain to projects the potential dissemination and mainstreaming benefits of developing quantitative indicators under these headings. Such indicators could include both "hard" indicators around progression of participants, uptake of project ideas, changes made to organisations' policies etc. and also "soft" indicators around movement of participants towards the workplace. The latter would be particularly relevant under the Employability pillar, and can draw on the UK's Institute for Employment Studies publication: *Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled*¹⁰.

An *ad hoc* group, including representatives of the TSS, the Managing Authority and the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit should be established to agree a workplan for the development of further performance indicators for EQUAL.

3.6 Financial Control and Monitoring

3.6.1 Systems for Financial Control

The EQUAL CIP emphasises the importance of financial reporting by DPs and monitoring by the Managing Authority and the TSS. The rules governing this aspect of the administration of EQUAL are largely set down at EU level and are overseen at national level by the Managing Authority and an ESF Paying Authority (currently also situated in the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, but independent of the Managing Authority function). The ESF Paying Authority requires the Managing Authority to provide adequate assurance that Community rules are being complied with before claims are certified and submitted to the European Commission.

There is also an ESF Financial Control Unit, with an independent function to ensure compliance with the financial requirements of European Council and Commission regulations. Functions of this unit include:

¹⁰ Available at www.esf.gov.uk/evaluation/documents.shtml#doc7

- providing advice to the Paying Authority on the proper management and control of ESF-funded operations, in accordance with the relevant EU regulations;
- devising and conducting an overall audit programme;
- issuing audit reports as appropriate.

The ESF Financial Control Unit may conduct audits or control visits of EQUAL as it sees fit. The July 2003 report of the TSS to the Monitoring Committee stated that preventative audits had been undertaken at the start of Action 2 with eight of the 21 Round 1 projects.

3.6.2 DP Views on Financial Controls

The First Interim Evaluation reported that the DPs felt the financial reporting and monitoring was overly onerous. In particular, they felt that too much detail was being requested from projects, and that the rules around co-financing and match funding were very complicated. The Evaluation also noted that, both in the TSS and on the projects, the people involved in the core project work were also the people managing the financial side of the project.

The Evaluation recommended that the TSS employ a dedicated person with an accounting or financial background to support the projects. The former recommendation was implemented from January 2003 (with somebody hired on a three-day a week basis). By mid-July 2003, some 18 of the 21 projects had been visited and four financial management workshops held. Our survey of DPs indicates that the hiring of this dedicated financial person has led to a considerable improvement in how the DPs view the financial monitoring of projects. A number of projects specifically commented on the quality of the support provided by the TSS in 2003.

The First Interim Evaluation also recommended that projects employ dedicated people to deal with financial matters. This has happened on some projects, and our research indicates that it does considerably ease the burden on project managers. During Action 1 on Round 2, it should be recommended to all projects that they have such a person on the project team. (In some cases, project managers may themselves have financial expertise, but this would be unusual.)

3.6.3 ESF Control Mission – Systems Audit

Unit F/3 (Control and Audit) of DG Emploi undertook a "systems audit on management and control systems for managing and paying authority in Ireland – EQUAL Community Initiative" between 30 June and 04 July 2003. The subsequent report stated: "The main objective of the mission was to examine the management and internal control systems with regard to the expenditure declared under the EQUAL Ireland Community Initiative by the Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Employment which acts, as far as ESF is concerned, as

Managing and Paying Authorities in respect of Art. 9 (n) and (o) of Council Regulation 1260/99. Furthermore, the audit team also focussed on the activities of the TSS which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme". The audit reviewed 14 DPs using desk research and visited two DPs.

The audit reached three conclusions:

1. "Testing and verification of the management and control systems during the present audit have shown that the systems function well and that adequate assurance can be obtained from them;
2. the pro-active approach of the DETE EQUAL Managing Authority in co-operation with the TSS through the publication of manuals and procedures, and the organisation of seminars and workshops should, in principle, lead to a correct and efficient implementation of the EQUAL programme;
3. the audit team however would like to insist on the formal approval of DP revised budgets and action plans following the budget cuts for Actions 2 and 3. The current situation creates, although involuntarily, a breach in the audit trail ... which must be remedied without delay".

Point 3 above refers to the fact that the plans agreed at the end of Action 1 contained budgets totalling to a sum greater than the total funding available. This led to budgets being revised downwards during Summer 2002 and subsequent sending of grant offer letters to the DPs. However, the audit noted that "no clear indications were made in this letter of which costs were not accepted or which budget/activity was approved. Although it became apparent during the control mission that the DPs have, for themselves, redressed their budgets (i.e. revised their own plans) there is no formal approval by the DETE, thus constituting a technical breach in the audit trail".

The overall results of the audit were therefore positive in regard to the financial control systems for EQUAL. In regard to the issue raised in Point 3 above, if the suggestion made in Chapter 2 of this Evaluation is followed (i.e. that DP budgets are agreed at the start, rather than at the end, of Action 1), then this issue will not arise under Round 2.

3.7 Co-operation with Northern Ireland

The EQUAL CIP contains a chapter on "Co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic". This states (as does the CIP in Northern Ireland) that:

- the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), one of the North/South bodies under the Belfast Agreement, will have a role in supporting cross-border aspects of EQUAL;
- the SEUPB will sit on the Monitoring Committees in Northern Ireland and in the Republic;

- there will be a cross-border dimension to mainstreaming, with the Equality Authority and the Equality Commission (in Northern Ireland) playing "a primary role in implementing such a strategy on behalf of both National Authorities under the umbrella of the SEUPB".

Since the CIP was written, a number of actions have taken place:

1. the Managing Authorities (the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in the Republic and the Dept. of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland) have taken observer status on each other's Monitoring Committees;
2. North/South co-operation has been placed as a standing agenda item for meetings of both Monitoring Committees and is to be addressed in each EQUAL annual report North and South;
3. a North/South Steering Committee has been established to encourage and guide North/South co-operation. This includes the two Managing Authorities, the two Equality bodies and the TSS. It is chaired by the SEUPB. It agreed a mandate "to support, co-ordinate and advise on mainstreaming and other opportunities for co-operation under the EQUAL Community Initiative on a North/South basis";
4. a one-day seminar for the 21 DPs from the South and the six from the North was held in Carrick-on-Shannon in May 2002. This allowed for initial links to be made between the DPs and for the common context for the Initiative on both sides of the border to be set out;
5. the Equality Authority and the Equality Commission have met bilaterally on a number of occasions to discuss their roles in regard to EQUAL;
6. a second North-South seminar for all DPs was planned for late-November 2003, with the provisional title *Accommodating Diversity in Employment and Provision*;
7. projects are encouraged to establish their own cross-border links at a DP level.

The First Interim Evaluation (Autumn 2002) noted that a number of structures to support North/South co-operation had been established. It stated: "These allow for the possibility of good North/South co-operation between projects during implementation and around mainstreaming, and between the National Authorities and Equality bodies. Given that different approaches exist to many issues North and South, there appears to be significant scope for learning between organisations. The process could also encourage more on-the-ground co-operation between organisations North and South (e.g. members of the wider Development Partnerships) through the building of informal networks ... With these structures now in place, the challenge is to ensure that the *potential* for North/South co-operation under EQUAL is realised". The First Interim Evaluation made a number of recommendations in this regard.

Unfortunately, there appears to have been a low level of activity on this dimension of the programme between Autumn 2002 and August 2003 (when the research for this Evaluation was being undertaken). While there had been plans to have two North-South seminars involving all projects per year, none were held between May 2002 and August 2003 (one was planned for November 2003). Our survey of DPs

indicates the level of co-operation of DPs with organisations in Northern Ireland is low, with only seven DPs having any North-South contacts. One said that these contacts had been facilitated by the SEUPB, with the other six having generated the contacts through other means (or having had them previously, e.g. for projects in counties next to Northern Ireland). The level of knowledge of the SEUPB among DP project managers (many of whom were recruited after May 2002) was low - half did not know of the SEUPB's role around North-South co-operation. As such, this dimension of the programme appears to constitute a missed opportunity to date.

The North-South Steering Committee is hoping to use the November 2003 event to re-energise the North-South dimension of EQUAL. While this event was still being planned in Summer 2003, the preliminary idea was to involve all the DPs from Northern Ireland and the Republic, as well as employers from both jurisdictions. The possibility was being discussed of the event leading to the creation of working groups around specific issues relating to equality and diversity in the workplace. These would draw on work being undertaken on these issues both North and South and prepare materials for dissemination, particularly aimed at employers in all parts of the island. The timeframe for this work was expected to be the first half of 2004.

This event (as planned in Summer 2003) would appear to have the potential to make a useful contribution to EQUAL, as there is a need for work in this area, at least in the Republic of Ireland. The distinct legislative frameworks North and South may suggest learning between the two areas. The Republic can perhaps learn from the longer history of the implementation of equality legislation in Northern Ireland, and the approach would also allow for interchange between the Equality Authority and the Equality Commission.

There is a sense that the full potential of North/South co-operation has not been achieved in Round 1, due primarily to organisational difficulties. As such, it is recommended that a workplan (with defined actions and identified organisations responsible for implementation) be prepared by the North/South Steering Committee for approval by the Summer 2004 Monitoring Committee, as to how this dimension of the programme can be better facilitated under Round 2.

4. Progress on Key Principles of EQUAL

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 1, drawing on the European Commission's April 2000 Communication to the Member States, noted that the EQUAL Community Initiative is founded on a number of principles - partnership, transnational co-operation, innovation, empowerment and mainstreaming. The Mid-term Evaluation is asked to review how these principles are being addressed in the programme. The first four of these principles are reviewed in Chapter 4, with mainstreaming addressed in Chapter 5.

Based on the same European Commission Communication, the four principles reviewed in Chapter 4 were described as follows in Chapter 1:

- **Partnership:** EQUAL funds projects implemented by Development Partnerships (DPs) rather than single organisations. A DP should "bring together interested actors, with relevant competence, who will co-operate to develop an integrated approach to multi-dimensional problems". DPs can be organised by geography (i.e. relevant actors in a specific geographic area) or by sector.
- **Transnational Co-operation:** All DPs must have at least one partner from another Member State and, in most cases, this is another EQUAL-funded DP. DPs may also co-operate with counterparts outside the EU, e.g. in candidate countries through the PHARE programme.
- **Innovation:** The nature of EQUAL means that it funds ideas or approaches that are new. EQUAL uses a three-fold typology of innovations – those relating to processes (i.e. developing new methods, tools or approaches), those relating to goals (i.e. developing new objectives) and those relating to context (i.e. the political or institutional structures in which labour market issues are addressed).
- **Empowerment:** EQUAL projects should involve the different partners in the DP, and the people being targeted by the project, in decision making. The aim is to increase the relevance and focus of the project by involving these stakeholders as fully as possible.

This chapter is based primarily on the survey (and case studies) undertaken for this Evaluation and the reports of the TSS to Monitoring Committee meetings.

4.2 Partnership

4.2.1 Characteristics of DPs

The EU's EQUAL website¹¹ stated in July 2003 that 1,503 DPs existed at that point, with over 13,000 partners. This implies an average number of partners per DP of 8.7. The website indicated that the largest average DP sizes could be found in Denmark, Greece and Spain (approximately 25, 18 and 15 partners per average DP), with the smallest average DP sizes in Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg and the French-speaking part of Belgium (all three or fewer).

Based on the Irish EQUAL project directory, the 21 projects in Round 1 have some 215 partners, implying an average number of partners of 10.2. Smaller DPs (in terms of number of partners) are DAWN (with three) and WIN, Equal Ireland and INTERACT (with four)¹². Two DPs have over 15 partners – Clare Equality Partnership (with 22) and the Dublin Employment Pact (with 48).

Each DP nominates a "designate partner" that, according to the CIP, "shall be responsible within the DP for management of the fund and for disbursing the fund within the DP in accordance with the joint agreement of all partners concerned. ... This partner shall be responsible to the Managing Authority for the correct and proper use of the fund and for the submission of payment claims". These are not "lead partners" in terms of their role in the core project work, although they may sometimes also take that role. The 21 Irish designate partners break into:

- six Area Based Partnerships;
- two each of companies limited by guarantee, community organisations and voluntary organisations;
- one each of a LEADER group, a Chamber of Commerce, a trade union, a County Enterprise Board, a university, a semi-state body, a state agency, an Employment Pact and a consortium.

Of 18 survey responses, 17 DPs said that at least two DP partners had previously worked together.

4.2.2 Dynamics of Development Partnerships

The survey was interested in how the DPs work was organised in practice. Of 18 DPs that responded, some 13 said that, in practice, one partner takes a lead role in implementing their project. In most cases the designate partner is the lead partner. Comments as to how this lead role is manifested included:

¹¹ This information was available at www.europa.eu.int?comm?employment_social/equal

¹² See Table 1.5 for details of DPs

- Project Director of lead partner takes a direct day-to-day interest in the project (perhaps formally recognised through a Chairman role);
- Designate partner essentially provides all the match-funding;
- Lead partner in practice "holds the purse strings";
- EQUAL project is located in lead partner premises;
- Project manager or other project staff work part-time on the EQUAL project and part-time on work for lead partner.

However, the DPs emphasised that even when there is a strong lead partner (as appears to exist in some two-thirds of Irish DPs), this does not preclude a strong contribution from the other DP partners, particularly in areas where they bring a specific expertise to the project. In other words, for most projects, the fact that the project idea originated with one organisation seems to have led to that organisation maintaining a central role, but with the other partners also making important inputs to the project work.

The survey also indicated that, of the 18 DPs:

- in eight, the Project Manager is based in the offices of one of the DP member organisations with ten having independent project offices;
- in six, the Project Manager is seconded from one of the organisations in the DP, with 12 having Managers recruited specifically for the projects.

Almost all DPs meet on a regular basis (normally monthly). Typically, a progress report is presented to a project Steering Committee or Board by the Project Manager/Coordinator. The DEP project (with 48 partners) has a subset of the wider DP that meets monthly, with the wider DP kept informed through a quarterly newsletter and meeting every six months or so.

The day-to-day roles of the Project Managers also vary. Of the 18 who replied to the survey:

- 11 Project Managers said that they have extensive day-to-day freedom to manage and "get on with" the project;
- four said the DP partners had a "hands on" role in managing the work; and
- the remaining three preferred to classify the situation as being a mixture of day-to-day autonomy watched over closely by the partners.

4.2.3 Level of Partnership being Achieved

The First Interim Evaluation concluded that the DPs were an advance over the experience of EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT for a number of reasons:

- they create a "space" where partnership between actors from the state, private and community/voluntary sectors can co-operate at local level. The cultural differences between the sectors involved are acknowledged (and have created problems in some instances). However, the DP is a "neutral" place for the different organisations to co-operate on a basis of equality. As such, they contribute to the development of partnership between the different sectors on a local level;
- a DP provides a range of expertise "on tap" to the project, which can provide a potentially considerable resource for projects;
- while the formation of some DPs had generated discussions and disagreements, these discussions are likely over the lifetime of the project to make it easier to disseminate the outcomes of the projects. By involving mainstream organisations in working groups relating to pilot actions, DPs give these organisations an interest in the outcomes. The DP structure also allows input from a range of mainstream organisations to be received before the project outcomes are fixed, thereby avoiding unnecessary errors. On a practical level, the existence of DPs increases the number of direct routes for project dissemination.

These conclusions were confirmed by the research for the Mid-term Evaluation. Of the 18 DPs that responded to the survey, some 15 said that the DP was working successfully and contributing to the success of the project. Benefits of partnership cited by projects include:

- by bringing together diverse groups, it gives each individual partner a wider view and shows the benefits of working together (even in other non-project subject areas);
- the project would not work if it was "stand alone" but an integrated approach works;
- the wealth of experience of partners provides credibility in the commercial world;
- DP approach inherently promotes the development of an understanding of other organisations' opinions and sensitivities;
- DP allows a formal "excuse" for partners to network with each other.

Of the three DP Project Managers who did not feel the partnership approach was useful, two felt the project could have been implemented without other organisations and one spoke of the difficulty in getting partners to commit to actions, beyond just attending meetings. These do suggest that, while the partnership approach does appear to be generally beneficial to projects, it does make demands on the Project Managers in terms of co-ordinating the DP organisations.

A further point arising from the survey (and case studies) was the importance of having continuity of personnel for the lifetime of the project, if at all possible. Working relationships and mutual understanding of organisational issues take time to emerge and changes in personnel are damaging in this regard.

4.3 Transnational Co-operation

4.3.1 Establishment and Nature of TCAs

Final Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCAs) were submitted by projects at the end of Action 1 (May 2002). The process of establishing the partnerships worked well and the system was considered a considerable improvement over that used for EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT. However, the First Interim Evaluation noted a number of challenges arising from the fact that EQUAL is implemented somewhat differently in different EU Member States:

- timeframes and rules on eligible activity vary somewhat across Member States;
- some Member States do not encourage meetings between partners in advance of approval into Action 2;
- some allow many projects into Action 1 but then greatly cut back for Action 2, meaning some Irish DPs lost partners at that point;
- delays in selection in any Member State create problems for projects in all Member States.

Data from the July 2003 report by the TSS to the Monitoring Committee show that the 21 Irish EQUAL projects in Round 1 have some 47 partnerships with other EQUAL projects in Europe (46 from the EU and one from the Czech Republic). This represents an average of 2.2 partners per project. There were also a small number of overseas partners not funded by EQUAL (e.g. the Blanchardstown Equal Project has the EU Job Rotation Association in its partnership).

The TSS report also noted the location of the transnational partners of the Irish DPs. Of the 47 partners that are EQUAL projects, the single highest number of partners came from Germany (seven across the 21 partners), with the Netherlands, France and Portugal each supplying five partners and Spain and Sweden supplying four partners each.

4.3.2 Level of Co-operation being Achieved

The guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation of EQUAL¹³ provide a typology of transnational co-operation for EQUAL projects¹⁴, with five categories, as defined and shown in Table 4.1. The first four of these categories can be seen as progressively deeper levels of co-operation, with the fifth (exchange of participants) being a different type of co-operation. As part of the survey for this Evaluation, projects were asked to categorise their own level of co-operation. Multiple answers were permitted and the ratings of the Project Managers are shown below.

¹³ As prepared by the European Commission in July 2000

¹⁴ This typology is in turn based on the final European wide evaluations of EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT, as undertaken by NEI/FHVR and PLS Consult respectively (both published in March 2000)

TABLE 4.1 TYPES OF TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION UNDER EQUAL	NO. OF PROJECTS
<p>1. Exchange of Information and Experience ("Getting to know each other") This model usually represents the starting point of transnational co-operation and it is also the common denominator for all the following models. Partners exchange information about their projects and the background to their activities. Partners have not explicitly defined joint concrete objectives of their co-operation at this stage.</p>	18
<p>2. Parallel development of Innovative Approaches In this model, partners share and pursue a common concrete objective, yet work relatively independently (in parallel) of each other on the more practical realisation of their common goal. The exchange of experiences is less general and more systematically goal-related than in the first model above. It is a systematic attempt to secure support in the development of innovations from partners with comparable interests.</p>	14
<p>3. Import, Export or Adoption of New Approaches and their Adaptation to Own Situation This model is usually a variant or continuation of the "parallel development" model above, coming into play when it becomes apparent in the course of transnational co-operation that the project partner already has a largely "complete" solution for one's own problem. In that case, transnationality makes it possible for certain partners to have access to insights which the other partner already possesses.</p>	9
<p>4. Joint Development – Division of Tasks with a Common Objective This model often results from partnerships that have been in existence for some time. It implies a common perception of the problem and an intention to find a joint solution to it, making conscious use of individual strengths. The steps required to solve the problem are defined and the resulting tasks divided up among the partner projects.</p>	5
<p>5. Sub-model/Additional Activity: Exchange of Trainees/Trainers/Staff The exchange of trainees, trainers or staff between the translational partners is an additional activity or a sub-model which usually occurs in parallel with one of the four main models. But these activities need to go beyond study visits (otherwise they would belong to the first model of co-operation above). There has to be a precise definition of the specific objectives of the exchange in relation to the further development and progress towards the common project objective.</p>	7
<p>SOURCE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2000), GUIDELINES FOR THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EQUAL</p>	

Given that the first four models relate to increasing deeper levels of co-operation, it is perhaps to be expected that fewer DPs would place themselves in each successive category. Of the 18 respondents, all placed themselves in the first category and 14 (78%) felt they are working to the same goals as their partners, in a parallel (but independent) way. Half of the projects surveyed said they both work to the same end-goals but try to incorporate (in full or in part) learning from the partner projects, while five of the 18 (28%) said their projects divided tasks between them to one mutually beneficial end. Some seven of the 18 projects (39%) have an element of exchange of participants.

Table 4.1 indicates that the transnational dimension of EQUAL is (at least in some cases) achieving a deeper level of co-operation than was the case under EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT. This is reinforced by the TSS July 2003 report to the Monitoring Committee, which lists progress in relation to transnational products and activities. Joint products produced to that time include a database, a manual/good practice guide, two websites, a CD ROM, seminar papers and research outputs.

The two-way nature of co-operation was highlighted by the answers to a question in the survey asking if the DPs considered themselves as primarily givers or receivers of learning in their partnership, or if the benefits were shared. Of 16 responses, some 14 (88%) thought the benefits were equally shared, with one each (6%) considering themselves as primarily givers and receivers of learning.

4.3.3 DP Views on Transnational Dimension

The benefits of transnational co-operation were seen from the DP survey, when projects listed not only the joint products but specific benefits such as "seeing labour market interventions in partner countries at first hand" and "learning about alternative approaches to family friendly policies, e.g. childcare voucher system". In general, there was a feeling that transnational co-operation leads to new ideas. DPs also reported a boost to confidence by seeing that similar problems exist in other countries and from finding partners related to specific issues of relevance to them (e.g. the DPs working with issues relating to Travellers and Asylum Seekers). A spin-off benefit is a building up of on-the-ground networks between organisations in different EU countries.

To find out if transnationality is considered as a genuinely important part of projects, the survey asked DPs the following question: "If you could spend less on the transnational dimension of the project, and transfer that money to other aspects of the project, would you do so?". Of 17 responses, 14 (82%) said that they would not do so, with only three (18%) saying that they would do so. This represents a strong support for transnationality from the DPs themselves.

4.4 Innovation

4.4.1 Categories and Types of Innovation

The First Interim Evaluation reviewed innovation in the context of the selection process. The TSS (which had reviewed all applications for funding on behalf of the Selection Committee) found that innovation was highest in the Employability and Adaptability applications, with innovation in applications under the other pillars being lower, e.g. just bringing new actors together. The First Interim Evaluation also noted that the

TSS had worked with applications deemed to be relatively low on innovation during Action 1, and had improved this dimension to their projects.

The European Commission guidelines on the monitoring and evaluation of EQUAL identify three categories of innovation. Table 4.2 defines these categories and how the Irish DP Project Managers feel their projects fit with the categories. DPs could align their type of innovation with more than one category as a project can be innovative in more than one way.

TABLE 4.2 CATEGORIES OF PROJECT INNOVATION AND NUMBER OF PROJECTS CLASSIFYING THEMSELVES IN EACH CATEGORY	
CATEGORIES OF INNOVATION	NO OF PROJECTS
<i>Process-oriented innovations</i> focus on the process of reaching the objectives, through the development of new methods/approaches or the improvement/adaptation of existing ones	16
<i>Goal-oriented innovations</i> centre around the formulation of new objectives, new subject areas, new uses or new target groups, thus mainly focusing on the objectives and results of the activities;	8
<i>Context-oriented innovations</i> refer to the political and institutional structures within which the activities take place and the objectives are pursued and aim to improve the frame conditions or re-organise the existing settings, e.g. by developing or adapting networking practices.	13
SOURCE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION GUIDELINES ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EQUAL, FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATES SURVEY OF IRISH EQUAL PROJECTS	

Of 18 responses, some 16 DPs felt their projects demonstrate process-oriented innovation, eight that their projects show goal-oriented innovation and 13 that their projects have context-oriented innovation. It is not surprising that process-oriented innovations are most common, as most projects would be expected to be developing new approaches or methods. However, the fact that 13 out of 18 respondent DPs (72%) feel they are challenging the political and institutional structures within which activities take place indicates a high level of ambition on the part of many of the Irish projects. This ambition is reinforced by the fact that most DPs categorise themselves as undertaking at least two different types of innovation.

The projects were also asked to rate the level of innovation on their project on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (very high). While there is obviously some potential for projects to exaggerate the extent of their own innovation, of 18 respondents, there were no ratings of 1, one rating of 2, 12 ratings of 3, three ratings of 3.5 and two ratings of 4. Overall, therefore, the DP managers certainly feel their projects demonstrate a generally high level of innovation.

To justify this, the DPs were asked to describe the innovative or new things that their projects were doing. A wide range of answers were received, e.g:

- one stop shop for employers that wish to employ people with a disability;
- developing common health/labour market organisation protocols for dealing with drug users;
- piloting the delivery of traditional Leaving Cert modules using Leaving Cert applied methods;
- new ways of numeracy/literacy benchmarking;
- new approaches to retraining and re-skilling farmers to meet changing needs;
- developing a community radio station directly involving target group;
- developing a new equality standards brand/marque;
- providing entrepreneurial training for a hitherto ignored target group;
- working with a target group not engaged before;
- accrediting a new Work-Life training module;
- undertaking a job rotation programme in private company (first in Ireland);
- developing new ways for local authorities in Ireland to undertake recruitment;
- study of needs and treatment of non Irish nationals in the workplace;
- new training programme for trainers in how to tackle inequality in the workplace;
- development of flexible working for older people, managers and working fathers;
- development of diagnostic tool to benchmark current status of work/life balance;
- project for asylum seekers providing outreach, information, referral and support.

The above list is not comprehensive but indicates that a range of innovative actions is being undertaken under Round 1 of the EQUAL programme. Assuming the actions are successfully piloted up to 2004 or 2005 by projects, there will be a potential to effect a range of changes to national policies and practices in relation to inequality and the labour market.

4.4.2 Partnership and Innovation

Both the local (DP) and transnational partnerships of the Irish EQUAL projects have the potential to contribute to project-level innovation.

As regards the local partnership, all 18 of the projects surveyed said that the wider members of their local DP had contributed in an important way to the project's innovation. This therefore appears to be an important benefit of the DP structure (as opposed to projects being implemented by one organisation only). It may also contribute to the relatively high level of ambition of project innovation, as discussed earlier. Local partners may both help to provide an understanding of the deep-rooted nature of the problems being addressed, as well as giving projects the confidence to feel their ideas can change the context in which issues around inequality can be addressed.

Some 11 of the 18 DPs that responded to the survey considered that their transnational partners had made important contributions to the innovation of their project.

4.5 Empowerment

The European Commission’s April 2000 Communication to the Member States on EQUAL states: “The principle of empowerment will be central to EQUAL. In practice, this will mean that those involved in the implementation of activities should also take part in the decision-making”.

In reviewing the extent to which this principle is being taken into account by the DPs, we asked each project to rate its level of involvement of the project target groups in the steering of the project (as would seem to be implied by the European Commission definition). The answers are shown in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3 LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF TARGET GROUPS IN STEERING PROJECT	
Level to which Target Groups are Involved	Number of responses
TGs are centrally involved in all discussions	3
TGs have an important role in steering the project	7
TGs are involved but their role is low in steering project	3
TGs receive project benefits, but do not have a role in steering the project	5

SOURCE: FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATES SURVEY OF EQUAL PROJECTS

Table 4.3 indicates that, of 18 survey respondents, only three (17%) fully involve the target groups in decisions relating to the running of the project. A further seven (39%) say the target groups have an important role in steering the project.

The pilot actions of some DPs do not directly work with members of the end target groups, e.g. those trying to change systems, cultures etc. However, this does not necessarily imply that the end beneficiaries cannot have an input into decisions concerning the direction of the project. It may not be optimal during all pilot EQUAL actions to directly involve the target groups but the responses of the DPs do indicate that there is room for improvement on this principle in Ireland.

Having said that, all but one of the 18 DPs that responded to the survey stated that they had tried to apply the concept of empowerment to their project. This indicates a general goodwill towards the principle. Projects backed this up by listing a range of actions that they have undertaken to try to promote empowerment. These included:

- encouraging the target groups to be proactive to help themselves;
- providing a voice for target groups;

- undertaking ongoing consultation with participants and encouraging them to shape the project;
- having weekly meeting with participants;
- undertaking focus groups with lone parents with a view to bringing representatives onto DP;
- running a course on Citizenship and Democracy for target groups;
- rotation of target group participants on DP Board, one permanent and one rotating;
- involving target groups in design of pilots;
- bringing non national employees into groups in workplace to discuss issues;
- trying to open decision making processes to the target group;
- empowering beneficiaries to come forward at meetings;
- providing information to target groups.

This list of actions indicates that, while empowerment may often not be interpreted as being about giving the target groups a central role on the project, it is being taken into account on projects, and is being addressed through specific project actions.

In this context, in the second of the EQUAL online newsletters in Ireland (Spring 2003), the TSS decided that the "major focus" of the newsletter would be on empowerment. In an article in the newsletter, the TSS begins by saying: "Empowerment is fundamentally about change. Change in the way people relate to each other and, more significantly, change in the way people perceive the status quo. Empowerment is also about power, about access to power, about who makes decisions and about how decisions are made ...". The article acknowledges that "one of the most challenging aspects of the EQUAL programme is that it asks all involved in the programme to look at the empowerment agenda seriously". It goes on to describe different approaches to empowerment at policy-making, DP and participant levels, and approaches being adopted by DPs under Round 1 in Ireland. The article effectively challenged DPs to look at the approaches they were adopting to empowerment and whether these could be improved.

4.6 Issues Arising on Key EQUAL Principles

Based on the documentation seen by the Evaluator, including the July 2003 TSS report to the Monitoring Committee, and the survey of projects undertaken in Summer 2003, Chapter 4 presented a review of progress across four key principles of EQUAL. A number of issues arise from this review.

Partnership, as manifested in the DPs, has been a positive dimension to the programme and should be maintained. During Action 1, DPs should be asked to review their DP composition to ensure they have all necessary expertise to undertake the project actions, and at least begin a dissemination process. All DPs should be encouraged to have formal team-building exercises for their DP personnel during Action 1, or early in Action 2.

Transnational co-operation has also been a successful principle dimension to date, and should be maintained as a core EQUAL principle. A number of issues arising from the selection process imply that the level of co-ordination of how EQUAL is implemented in different Member States could be increased further for Round 2. At an Irish level, the main suggestion would be to encourage projects to be more systematic in preparing for exchange visits (in terms of defining precise outputs desired) and in having "de-briefing" meetings afterwards. These relatively simple processes can help optimise the outputs of this principle of EQUAL.

The research indicates that a relatively high level of *innovation* is being achieved by the projects under Round 1 of EQUAL in Ireland. The fact that innovation at application stage was lower on the Entrepreneurship and Equal Opportunities pillars can perhaps be partly remedied for Round 2 by pointing out in the application materials the kinds of innovation expected under EQUAL. The importance of getting inputs from all DP (and, if possible, transnational) partners, at both application and Action 1 stages is also emphasised by the research, which show that these are both sources of innovation for the project.

As regards *empowerment*, all but one of the DPs surveyed said that they were attempting to incorporate the principle into their projects. A range of practices were cited in this regard. However, while empowerment is being taken into account, about half of the projects do not give people from the end target groups a significant role in decision making related to the project. This implies that empowerment is interpreted by a significant proportion of DPs in a manner narrower than the definition used in the European Commission's EQUAL guidelines. A challenge for Round 2 is to work with DPs during Action 1 to increase the level of empowerment around core project areas and, in particular, around project management and decision making.

5. Potential Impact and Mainstreaming of EQUAL

5.1 Introduction

By mid-2003, it was still early to discuss actual impacts or mainstreaming activity under the EQUAL programme in Ireland. As Chapter 3 showed, spend by projects on their Action 2 (implementation) work was at under 10% of the total proposed spend by end-2002. While progress improved in the first half of 2003, most projects were still very much in implementation mode, and impacts were just beginning to emerge.

Impacts at DP-level, insofar as they existed by mid-2003, are discussed in Section 5.2, together with comments on how the DPs are proposing to approach the issues of dissemination and horizontal mainstreaming (i.e. transferring the learning arising from the project to other organisations similar to those in the Development Partnership). Section 5.3 discusses the "architecture" that has been put in place to support mainstreaming at a policy (or vertical) level - in fact, a number of inter-linked structures and processes exist in this regard.

5.2 Emerging Impacts and Horizontal Mainstreaming Processes at DP Level

5.2.1 Emerging DP Impacts

The potential impact of the 21 Round 1 projects has already been seen in Table 1.5 (which described what the projects plan to achieve), Table 3.3 (which described progress to mid-2003) and Section 4.4 (which discussed the level of DP innovation). In terms of actual impacts, while generally noting the early stage of implementation, some 14 of the 18 DPs from which completed survey questionnaires were received said that their projects had already had some impact on EQUAL target groups by mid-2003. The remaining four projects had not yet reached this point.

All of the 14 projects that already had emerging impacts said they had systems in place to measure these impacts. However, in most cases, the indicators being used were those already being used for the quarterly monitoring data, i.e. projects tend to be measuring outputs, and to some extent results, but tend not to have impact indicators. This links back to the discussion in Section 3.5.2.

Of the 18 DPs that responded to the survey, some 12 said that, by mid-2003, there was already some evidence of impact on the organisations in the Development Partnership. These were stated to include an impact on employer practices, including increased awareness of equality and diversity issues, and impacts that arose from the transnational dimension of the programme.

5.2.2 Horizontal Mainstreaming at DP Level

Before project outcomes can be shared and disseminated, they must be documented. All projects have systems in this regard, primarily (as mentioned above) the systems in place for the quarterly monitoring returns. As mentioned above, and earlier, as these largely relate to outputs and, to some extent, results, they may not fully capture the project-level outputs. The thematic networks (see below) have a role to play in supporting projects to fully capture the learning arising.

A positive finding in this regard is that some 17 of the 18 projects are planning to supplement their ongoing measurements of project outcomes with a DP-level evaluation. On over half of the 18 DPs, the process of evaluation had already started or was being put in place in Summer 2003.

Some 17 of the 18 DPs also felt they had in place a clear strategy for disseminating the results and innovations of the projects – some 15 of these had recorded that strategy in a written format. Specific plans mentioned included using a specialist marketing/PR assistant to help disseminate results, working with the Equality Authority, using the resources of the DP partner organisations, developing websites and written project reports, working through the national thematic groups, using a local “Mainstreaming Forum” (organised by the County Development Board) and organising conferences and workshops.

Some 17 of the 18 survey respondents said that the wider DP members would play an important role in dissemination – the other project said the dissemination would be done centrally by the Project Manager. Some 14 of the DPs have already initiated transfers at local/regional level – examples of this provided to the Evaluator included:

- contacts with relevant local bodies, including local offices of farming organisations, trade unions, FÁS, the Chamber of Commerce and employer organisations;
- employer document produced and launched;
- weekly column being written for the local newspaper;
- invitations accepted to speak at relevant conferences and seminars;
- local network (broader than DP) to be set up to widen impact.

Three DPs said that there had already begun to encounter barriers to dissemination including the difficulty of developing relationships with statutory service providers, partly due to a difference in the cultures and partly due to the people in the organisations being busy and (in 2003) operating in a year when budgets for many statutory organisations were being tightened. The thematic networks may provide a forum to discuss these issues (which are likely to arise on a more widespread basis as project implementation continues and increased effort occurs from projects around dissemination and mainstreaming).

5.3 Emerging Impacts and Vertical Mainstreaming Processes at National Policy Level

5.3.1 Vertical Mainstreaming Structures

Even more so than at a DP level, impacts were at a very early stage at national policy level by mid-2003. However, the structures and processes to facilitate vertical mainstreaming were largely in place by mid-2003:

- the central structure is a national EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group. This held a first meeting on 07 May 2003 and a second meeting was planned for 31 October 2003. This group is itself overseen by a small Steering Committee;
- the main links between the projects and the Mainstreaming Policy Group are the Thematic Networks, of which two have been established, based on the Employability and Adaptability/Equal Opportunities pillars. Three meetings of each of these networks had occurred by September 2003;
- ongoing work will be undertaken by DPs themselves and by the TSS to arrange bilateral contacts to disseminate learning from projects – this is essentially an extension of the horizontal mainstreaming approach;
- the Equality Authority has been given a specific role around mainstreaming, both as a support to projects and as a bridge to mainstream organisations (including the Authority itself);
- a number of Irish DPs have become involved in EU-wide thematic networks, and the Irish Managing Authority and Technical Support Structure are taking a lead role in managing the Working Group on Lifelong Learning under the Adaptability pillar at an EU-wide level.

These structures and processes for vertical mainstreaming are discussed below, after which some general comments are made on the structures and processes now in place.

While this section does not focus on the DPs, the survey of DPs indicated that some 14 of the 18 that responded to the survey had strategies in place for vertical mainstreaming, of which nine had these strategies in written form. This indicates that some DPs were still engaging with this dimension of the

programme, which may be aided by the thematic networks. Some seven of the 18 DPs said they had undertaken some activity related to vertical mainstreaming by mid-2003 – these were mainly activities similar to those listed in Section 5.2.2 in relation to horizontal mainstreaming.

While it was early in mid-2003 to identify areas of policy impact, the two pillar-based thematic networks have identified seven (relatively broad) areas where policy impacts are likely to arise, based on the 21 Round 1 projects chosen. These are:

- innovative actions and practices around supporting people into employment;
- better integration of services between agencies;
- building links between target groups and employers, and between the community and voluntary sector and private sector employers;
- promotion of the equality and diversity agenda in the workplace;
- promoting the adaptability of workers and firms to change;
- provision of more and better investment in human capital and development of strategies for life-long learning;
- promotion of the integration of, and combating of discrimination against, disadvantaged groups.

While it was too early to evaluate outputs from these areas under the thematic networks, the strategy of using networks to identify areas of similar policy learning arising seems appropriate. If DP outputs provide the foundation for the whole mainstreaming process by providing new ideas to combat inequality and discrimination in the labour market, the thematic networks are a crucial link between the DP-level outputs and the policy domain, and will play an important role in matching DP activities with policy developments and/or gaps in policies and practices.

5.3.2 Mainstreaming Policy Group

The Terms of Reference for the Mainstreaming Policy Group (MPG) identify three broad objectives:

- to identify best practice and lessons learned within the pilot and experimental activities of EQUAL DPs and associated national thematic networks;
- to support their integration into local, regional, national and European employment and human resources development policies and practices in the context of achieving a labour market open to all;
- to support a capacity within relevant organisations to incorporate such good practice.

The inclusion of the third of these objectives is welcome as it signals an understanding of the challenges that exist for the mainstream organisations themselves in identifying, and then successfully incorporating, learning arising from projects. The Press Release from the National Authority when the MPG was established

states: "The ability of Statutory Agencies and Government Departments to take on board new learning and modify old policies and practices has often been criticised. This "meeting of minds" within the EQUAL mainstreaming policy group should provide a golden opportunity to prove the critics wrong".

The MPG has members representing four government departments - Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Social and Family Affairs, Education and Science and Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Work by the TSS shows that at least 12 of the 21 Round 1 EQUAL projects are relevant to each of these departments. The MPG also contains representatives of FÁS, the Equality Authority, IBEC, ICTU, the SFA, IFA, NESF, NDA, the two Regional Assemblies, the community and voluntary pillar, the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and the DPs. It is proposed to extend membership further to include the Office of Social Inclusion and Comhairle¹⁵. The Group is jointly chaired by the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Equality Authority.

The inaugural meeting of the MPG, in May 2003, heard presentations from the two organisations jointly chairing the Group, from the TSS (on the thematic networks) and from a DP (on behalf of all DPs). It also discussed how the mainstreaming process should proceed. Minutes of the meetings of the MPG Steering Committee (which had met twice by September 2003) indicate that feedback from participants was positive to the May 2003 MPG meeting. These minutes also suggest that the practical achievements if the MPG should be:

- to achieve 'buy-in' to the programme and the process and to achieve outputs by relevant Government Departments and agencies;
- to achieve open relationships between various policy fora and the EQUAL programme;
- to support a capacity in Departments and agencies to mainstream key themes within the EQUAL programme;
- to facilitate active engagement between stakeholders and MPG group members so that they will examine and ultimately adopt good practices into their own (mainstream) organisations.

Work of the Steering Committee during Summer 2003 included making inputs into Ireland's NAPSincl strategy (published at start-September 2003) and the National Employment Action Plan 2004-06, which was to be published in Autumn 2003. The Committee is also involved in planning, and inputting into, a North-South EQUAL conference in November 2003.

The Mainstreaming Policy Group has therefore been established, appears to have the necessary organisations represented (and at the correct level, at least at its first meeting) and has an active Steering Committee.

¹⁵ Other organisations identified by the DPs as targets for their learning, which are not represented on the MPG, include the Health Boards (six projects) and local authorities (five projects).

However, its work had not yet begun in earnest by Summer 2003. The goals, as set out by the Steering Committee above, seem appropriate and valid but will represent a significant challenge. For example, moving to a situation where government departments and agencies take "ownership" of the outputs of EQUAL is an important aim but cannot be achieved through quarterly or six-monthly MPG meetings. A programme of meeting individual MPG members (or sub-groups of members) on areas of interest to them (as the MPG intends) will facilitate more detailed discussion and will help to facilitate this goal. However, there is also an onus on the departments and agencies concerned to make a proactive effort to take the learning arising from EQUAL on board. In other words, while the MPG has an important collective role, it should also represent a starting point for more intensive contacts with the different member organisations. It is through these contacts that the real potential for practical mainstreaming exists.

5.3.3 Thematic Networks

As stated, two thematic networks have been established on the programme. The Employability thematic network began with a large networking event in February 2003 and had a second meeting for DP co-ordinators in June 2003. It is operating through a number of sub-groups focused on particular outcomes (e.g. building links with employers, issues around equality and diversity etc.). The Adaptability thematic network (which includes projects from the Equal Opportunities pillar) first met in Autumn 2002 and had subsequent meetings in January and September 2003.

The meetings up to Summer 2003 were essentially networking events. However, the networks have now moved to thinking about how to mainstream the expected project outcomes. Of the 18 projects that responded to the survey undertaken for this Evaluation, some 15 thought the thematic networks were useful, with three reserving judgement. This indicates that the projects see the networks as playing a useful role in supporting the mainstreaming of their project learning.

5.3.4 Role of the Equality Authority

Given its expertise in relation to the wider equality agenda, the Equality Authority is given a special role in the EQUAL CIP as regards mainstreaming. This is reflected in its role as Joint-Chair of the Mainstreaming Policy Group and in its North-South mainstreaming role (together with Northern Ireland's Equality Commission). The Equality Authority has developed a work programme informed by learning arising from the DPs, which involves three strands:

- (1) Supporting dialogue between policy makers about EQUAL, e.g. through the Mainstreaming Policy Group and with individual government departments;
- (2) Engendering a wider commitment about the EQUAL programme with the media, social partners and politicians;

(3) Developing a capacity within mainstream organisations to put learning into practice. This will involve working with mainstream organisations to assist and support them in taking on board the lessons emerging from EQUAL and is expected to be a particular focus of the Authority's work in 2004. It will involve piloting actions involving practical tools that can assist the process of mainstreaming, e.g. equality proofing exercises, equality audits and reviews. By supporting the development of 'equality infrastructure' in agencies/providers, it is hoped that they will become more capable of adopting the learning arising from EQUAL. The Authority is currently working with two DPs in this regard, with the aim of replicating the pilot actions at national level.

The Equality Authority also has roles in relation to:

- advising individual DPs on how to manage their outputs so that they produce useful "products" in relation to the wider national equality agenda – to this end, the Authority is working with five individual DPs;
- being itself a potential target for lessons arising from EQUAL projects. In particular, given the recent origins of Ireland's equality legislation, there is a need for practical projects to support organisations in interpreting and implementing this legislation. In a number of cases, EQUAL DPs are piloting ideas to fill these gaps.

The Authority feels it is familiar with the 21 EQUAL projects, and well placed to undertake its role around mainstreaming. It also stated that a number of the ideas it has for mainstreaming did not emerge until after a period of contact with the projects, pointing to the usefulness (if possible) for relationships between the mainstream and the EQUAL projects to develop, to facilitate the mainstreaming process.

5.3.5 EU-Wide Thematic Clusters

As at national level, EQUAL also undertakes a "laboratory" function at EU-wide level, i.e. as a testing ground for innovative pilot projects around combating inequality and discrimination. To provide channels at EU level for learning arising, six European Thematic Groups have been established, around Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, Equal Opportunities, Asylum Seekers and Partnership¹⁶.

Some seven of the 21 Irish DPs are involved in one or other of the European thematic groups. Based on the survey of projects for this Evaluation, all of these DPs are finding this part of the programme very useful for them, from their own project perspective.

Within the European Thematic Group on Adaptability, there are two working groups, which were launched in Poitiers, France at end-March 2003. One of these relates to Lifelong Learning – its full task is "working at the

interface of lifelong learning (supply and demand) and developing inclusive practices and policies". Ireland is Chairing this working group, and hosted the first meeting of the group in Dublin in June 2003.

Given the discussion in Chapter 2 about the changing Irish labour market, this involvement of the Irish Managing Authority with the EU-wide group on Life-long Learning seems to be of strategic importance to

¹⁶ For further information on EU Thematic Groups, see www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal

Ireland. The challenge will be to feed the learning arising on this matter from EQUAL projects all over the EU back into the Mainstreaming Policy Group. Indeed, this involvement opens up a further source of ideas for this group arising from EQUAL. The same is true for the other EU Thematic Groups, even though Ireland is taking a lower level of direct involvement.

The involvement by the individual Irish DPs in the European Thematic Groups also appears to be positive and this involvement should be supported and encouraged.

5.4 Issues Arising around Mainstreaming

Given the fact that most projects did not seriously begin project implementation until the first half of 2003, impacts were only beginning to emerge by mid-2003. However, the proposed mainstreaming structures had been largely put in place.

As regards horizontal mainstreaming, the focus of the DPs to mid-2003 was on moving into the implementation phase. By mid-2003, impacts were beginning to emerge on most projects. Some further indicators may need to be developed to fully capture these impacts. Almost all are intending to evaluate their project locally, which will be helpful in capturing project learning.

Horizontal dissemination and mainstreaming were also at an early stage but most projects had written strategies in this regard. All DPs should prepare written strategies as to how they propose to undertake both horizontal and vertical mainstreaming – the process of producing the document (which could be short) will encourage project thinking, and the plans can be discussed in the context of the thematic networks. Despite all the other structures, a responsibility still rests with the DP to document, disseminate and champion its own project learning over the brief period of the lifetime of the project.

Links should be encouraged between the (local) horizontal mainstreaming strategies and the national Mainstreaming Policy Group – it will be much easier for DPs to meet local and regional offices of statutory (and other) organisations if it known that these organisations are engaged with EQUAL nationally.

The Mainstreaming Policy Group seems well constituted, with good objectives and membership of the key people required for mainstreaming. It is likely to need to meet more frequently (perhaps quarterly) from Autumn 2003 onwards. The Group is not likely to be sufficient, however, to fully engage the organisations represented on it. As such, it should be seen as a forum which can discuss mainstreaming collectively but which also allows for more in-depth access to some of the key policy makers on a one-to-one basis, or in smaller groups. This kind of engagement, discussing individual project outputs or outputs by theme, is needed to properly transfer the project learning arising.

The role of the thematic networks and the Equality Authority, and the involvement with the EU Thematic Groups, all seem useful and should be pursued in both Rounds 1 and 2. A mechanism may be needed to feed the learning from the EU Thematic Groups into the MPG – this represents a further new source of innovation in the EQUAL programme.

Round 2 of EQUAL is scheduled to begin its application phase in Summer 2004, with Autumn 2004 dominated by the selection process. Given the heavy workload that this involves, there seems to be a danger that the TSS will be diverted away from its work on mainstreaming (it is involved in almost all of the mainstreaming structures) at a critical time. The Managing Authority needs to ensure that both of these important processes can take place in parallel during the second half of 2004 and the first half of 2005 (when the Action 1 work from Round 2 will be occurring but many Round 1 projects will be coming to an end).

6. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Conclusions

6.1.1 The EQUAL Programme in Ireland

EQUAL is an EU-wide Initiative, running from 2000 to 2006, which "offers a Europe-wide focus for experimenting with new ways of tackling the problems of inequality and discrimination related to the world of work". While small in terms of its budget compared to mainstream labour market programmes (EQUAL in Ireland has a budget of 47mn for 2000-06), its aim is not to replicate existing labour market interventions but to act as a kind of "laboratory" for new and innovative ideas to emerge.

As well as this commitment to innovation, EQUAL is based on a number of further principles:

- Projects are implemented by "Development Partnerships" (DPs), not individual organisations. A DP is expected to bring together relevant actors (e.g. by sector or by geographic area) to provide a multi-dimensional response to a labour market challenge;
- DPs have at least one partner (and usually more) from other EU Member States;
- DPs are expected to empower their target groups and include them in the core decision making of the project;
- Projects should aim not only to be undertake their pilot actions but to transfer the learning arising from those actions, both to similar organisations and to mainstream policy organisations.

Round 1 of EQUAL in Ireland involves 21 DPs, ten under the Employability pillar, three under the Entrepreneurship pillar, five under the Adaptability pillar, two under the Equal Opportunities pillar and one relating to asylum seekers.

6.1.2 Labour Market Context of EQUAL

Between mid-1994 and mid-2003, Ireland experienced a period of unprecedented labour market change. Over this nine-year period:

- the labour force increased from 1.43mn to 1.86mn;
- the number employed increased from 1.22mn to 1.78mn;

- the male participation rate rose from 68% to 70% and the female participation rate rose from 39% to 49%;
- unemployment fell from 211,000 to 81,400, with the rate down from 14.7% to 4.4%;
- long-term unemployment fell from 128,200 to 26,900, with the rate down from 9% to 1.4%.
- the nine year period included seven years of consistently strong employment growth and unemployment reductions, followed by two years (2001-03) when employment continued to rise but unemployment had also begun to rise again.

In this context, the major challenges facing the Irish labour market in 1999/2000 arose in the context of a potential shortage of labour supply and a tightening of the market. The potential areas where innovative projects might emerge, as identified in the EQUAL CIP, responded to this. This was an appropriate strategy.

The choice of projects best matched the specific areas of innovation suggested as necessary by the CIP under the Employability pillar. This was also the area to which most EQUAL funding (45% of the total) was allocated. Some of the themes mentioned in the CIP were picked up by projects under the Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equal Opportunities pillars and for asylum seekers. As well as being affected by the level of funding available, only actual project ideas submitted as applications could be funded.

The ESRI's Medium-term Review of the Irish Economy (which was published in Summer 2003 and discusses the economy's prospects to 2010) forecasts that unemployment will peak in 2005 (at 5.7%, still relatively low by the standards of recent decades), before falling to 4.3% by 2010. It predicts a considerable move in the economy away from lower-skilled jobs and towards higher skilled service jobs in the coming years. It (and a recent FÁS study) also signal that the number of young people entering the Irish labour market each year has started to fall and there is a need to increase the emphasis on continuous training for people in employment and on mobilising people outside the labour force to enter the labour force.

The implication is that the issues set out in the EQUAL CIP in relation to these areas (life-long learning and mobilising/facilitating people to enter the labour force) continue to be relevant and, if anything, will become more important in the medium-term. Areas such as work-life balance, continuous training and up-skilling, flexible HR policies, integrating ethnic workers and mobilising groups such as older retired workers and women returners in general will continue to be highly relevant in Round 2 of EQUAL. While work continues to be needed to support particular target groups in (re)integrating into the labour market (as happens under what is now the Employability pillar), it may be appropriate to re-balance funding more towards areas that would fall under the Adaptability pillar for Round 2 of EQUAL. This is particularly the case if the EU target of 12.5% of the adult working age population in life-long learning is to be met.

In working with groups traditionally discriminated against in a labour market context, new research since 2000 has identified more clearly the barriers faced by a number of these groups. For example, the issue of

increasing the proportion of 55-64 year olds in work is now very much on the European agenda but currently receives no specific funding in Ireland, either under the mainstream EHRD OP or under EQUAL. Yet a considerable pool of potential workers exists in that age group, or moving towards that age group.

From the summary of key changes in the Irish labour market, and policy developments since 2000, there has been considerable activity around labour market policy development in recent years, reflecting the pace of change in the labour market itself. The new EU Employment Guidelines also set out a new policy framework at EU level. These policy developments update the policy context in which Round 2 of EQUAL will operate.

In summary, the approach of the EQUAL CIP in 2000 appears to have been a valid and appropriate one, although the balance of funding could perhaps have been more heavily towards the Adaptability pillar. The fundamental issues facing the Irish labour market have not changed since then, despite what is forecast to be a temporary increase in unemployment. If anything, the issues of life-long learning and mobilising new people to enter the labour force are even more important.

6.1.3 Implementation of EQUAL to Mid-2003

The implementation of EQUAL in Ireland up to mid-2003 has been a relatively smooth one, with the programme progressing as planned in the CIP.

Some 62 applications for funding were received under Round 1 round of EQUAL by the closing date of 07 September 2001. There followed a process of evaluating these applications, leading to the *selection of 21 projects* for funding by 15 November 2001. Having reviewed a sample of technical assessments (relating to both successful and unsuccessful applications), they appeared to be comprehensive and fair. A considerable amount of work was undertaken by the Technical Support Structure (TSS) in this regard, which greatly facilitated the work of the Selection Committee. Having discussed the overall selection process with a number of informants, we believe that the overall selection process was rigorous and transparent.

On *Action 1*, we believe that it serves a useful purpose and strengthened projects considerably. The TSS undertook a range of actions to support the DPs in this phase of their work. These took considerable time and will enhance the ultimate outputs of the projects and the Initiative. An area where further work could be done is in supporting projects to identify project-level indicators, particularly result and impact indicators.

DPs were issued with an *Action 2* letter of offer from the Managing Authority (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) in June 2002 and an Action 3 letter of offer at end-August 2002. However, progress in moving into the implementation of projects was slow over the remainder of 2002 as DPs recruited Project Co-ordinators and had to get formal buy-in from DP partners as regards match funding. By end-2002, just

under 10% of total Action 2 funds for Round 1 projects had been spent, and there were 129 participants by end-2002.

The evidence from the research undertaken for this Evaluation, however, is that the rate of progress accelerated considerably in the first half of 2003. On almost all projects, implementation work was well underway by mid-2003. The one project causing concern was that of the Kildare-Wicklow DP, but the Managing Authority and the TSS were confident that this would start its work in Autumn 2003, albeit with a reduced budget.

The TSS has been working closely with projects on the implementation of Action 2. A survey of projects for this Evaluation showed that projects rate this work highly and generally express a high level of satisfaction with the TSS. This includes with its support on financial issues, which had been a source of dissatisfaction for projects during Action 1, but which is felt to have improved considerably in 2003.

While the Programme Complement identifies indicative *indicators* for EQUAL, to date no specific thematic or programme indicators have been developed. Having said that, considerable information exists from the monitoring system on the outputs and results of the programme. However, identification of some key output, result and impact indicators would enhance this situation.

The national *financial control systems* for EQUAL were audited by Unit F/3 (Control/Audit) of DG Emploi in July 2003 and received a generally very positive review. A number of specific recommendations were made for improvements to the auditing systems.

As regards *North/South co-operation*, while structures have been put in place to support this dimension of the programme (which has its own chapter in the CIP), progress to date has been slow in generating a real North/South dynamic on EQUAL. As such, this has represented something of a missed opportunity to date on the programme.

6.1.4 Progress on Key Principles of EQUAL

As stated above, EQUAL is underpinned by a number of "principles". This Evaluation found that the principles of partnership, transnational co-operation and innovation are working well under Round 1 in Ireland, with empowerment being adopted on a more patchy basis.

Regarding *partnership* at a local level, the average Irish DP has ten partners, compared to an EU average of just under nine partners. A wide range of types of organisations are involved in EQUAL, with Area Based Partnerships being the most common type of designate partner (representing six of the 21 designate partners). The research shows that a number of models of partnership have developed at project level, e.g. as

regards whether one partner takes a lead role in implementation or the extent of autonomy given to the Project Co-ordinator. Some 15 of 18 DPs who responded to the Evaluation survey felt their DP was working well and adding value to the project. In general, we feel the DPs create a "space" where partnership between actors from the state, private and community/ voluntary sectors can co-operate at local level. Cultural differences between the sectors involved must be acknowledged (and can create problems) but the DP provides a "neutral" place for the different organisations to co-operate on a basis of equality. As such, they contribute to the development of partnership between the different sectors on a local level.

The formation of *transnational partnerships* generally went smoothly, although the fact that EQUAL is implemented somewhat differently in different EU Member States creates some challenges. The 21 Irish projects have some 47 transnational partners, implying an average of 2.2 partners per DP. The Evaluation found that while all projects achieve lower levels of co-operation around networking, half of those that responded to the survey said they had moved to importing or exporting new approaches, and one-third of projects had at least one common task that was being undertaken with their overseas partners. This implies that transnational co-operation is at a deeper level than was generally achieved under EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT, the predecessors of EQUAL. When asked if they would like to move money from this dimension of their project to another area, over 80% of projects said they would prefer to keep the transnational dimension as it currently stands, implying that the DPs see it as an important source of value for their projects.

As regards *innovation*, the Evaluation indicates that almost projects are attempting to pilot process-oriented innovations, i.e. new methods or approaches to problems, about half are piloting goal-oriented innovations, i.e. working with new subject areas or objectives, and some two-thirds are trying to change the context in which the problems are addressed. The number of projects in the last two categories seems to indicate a generally high level of ambition by the Irish DPs. The role of both local and transnational partners was seen as valuable by DPs in contributing to this innovation.

All but one of the 18 DPs that responded to the Evaluation survey stated that they had tried to apply the concept of *empowerment* to their project. This indicates a general goodwill towards the concept. However, only about half of projects gave the end target groups an "important" or "central" role on the projects, with the other half providing benefits to the target groups but not directly involving them in the project decision making. This is the definition as set out in the EQUAL guidelines.

6.1.5 Potential Impact and Mainstreaming of EQUAL

As almost all projects had just started implementation in a serious way in the first half of 2003, the impacts achieved by mid-2003 remained low. However, 14 of the 18 survey respondents said that some impacts had

already been achieved as regards the target groups, and 12 of the 18 said that impacts had occurred on the DP member organisations.

Some 17 of the 18 survey respondents said that they already had a strategy in place for horizontal dissemination and mainstreaming, with 15 of the 18 having this strategy written down. All but one DP said that they were planning to undertake an evaluation of their project before it ended. Of those that had begun the process of horizontal mainstreaming, three had already encountered difficulties in reaching the right people in mainstream organisations.

At a national level, a number of structures have been put in place to support the mainstreaming process. These include a Mainstreaming Policy Group (with members from government departments, the social partners and other organisations relevant to equality issues and labour market innovation); two thematic networks established by the TSS for the 21 DPs, an identified mainstreaming role for the Equality Authority and involvement with the EU Thematic Groups.

The work of these groups was still at an early stage in Summer 2003 (e.g. the Mainstreaming Policy Group had met only once at that stage). However, the structures, and definition of the roles of the different organisations, appear to be adequate for the mainstreaming work ahead. The key challenge is to achieve genuine engagement with the organisations involved, so that they come to see the innovations at DP and project level, and their implications for the policies and practices of the mainstream.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are not made in order of importance but follow the order in which they emerged during the Evaluation report.

R1: For Round 2, the proportion of funding across the pillars should be rebalanced. Specifically, the proportion for the Adaptability pillar should be increased from 20% to 35%, to underpin a drive to innovation around life-long learning and general up-skilling in the economy. To facilitate this increase, funding for the Employability pillar should be reduced from 45% to 30%. This would better reflect the likely balance of needs of the Irish labour market in the medium-term.

R2: While the economic downturn may still be continuing in mid-2004 (when Round 2 is launched), the programme should continue to focus on the longer-term factors that underpin inequality and discrimination in relation to the world of work.

R3: In this context, the list of potential areas for innovation under EQUAL, as presented in the CIP, should be reviewed and updated for Round 2. This should take account of recent developments in the labour market, policy developments since 2000 and new research on the specific barriers facing a number of target groups (e.g. potential older workers, Travellers) in Ireland. Areas such as lifelong learning (particularly the upskilling of those already in employment), work-life balance, flexible work practices, providing in-company supports (especially for SMEs) and accommodating diversity continue to be important. The same holds true for a number of the groups mentioned in the original CIP, including older workers, ethnic minorities (including Travellers), early school leavers, women returners and groups covered under the equality legislation.

R4: In the context of the research undertaken (or commissioned) by the Equality Authority since 2001 on a number of groups experiencing labour market discrimination, the views of the Authority should be obtained in preparing a clear focus for Round 2

R5: This list of potential areas for innovation should be part of the literature circulated to potential applicants for Round 2 funding. While the Managing Authority cannot force organisations to submit proposals in any area, and innovative ideas may emerge in unexpected areas, it seems sensible to share the suggestions for areas of potential innovation that have emerged nationally as widely as possible.

R6: The project selection process should take into account the identified potential areas for innovation, which should form one element of the wider Technical Assessment of all applications by the Technical Support Structure.

R7: Budgets for Action 2 and Action 3 should be agreed with projects (subject to a small margin for change) at the beginning, rather than at the end, of Action 1. This will prevent DPs from preparing detailed action plans based on funding that does not subsequently materialise. It will also save time at the start of Action 2 (when many DP plans had to be revised during Round 1 of EQUAL).

R8: DPs should be given greater guidance on the development of project-level indicators during Action 1. This is separate to the process of gathering information for monitoring purposes and, in particular, projects should be encouraged to develop result and impact indicators, if possible.

R9: The timeframe for the closure of Action 1 should be reduced.

R10: The first task for most DPs at the start of Action 2 is the recruitment of a Project Co-ordinator. The evidence from Round 1 is that this decision is perhaps the most important of the entire project. The importance of the decision, and the consequent importance of having a clear job description, defined recruitment criteria and a professional recruitment process should be emphasised to all DPs.

R11: All DPs should be strongly encouraged to have a dedicated person (on a part-time basis) managing the financial management aspects of the project. The experience of Round 1 has been that this greatly reduces the time needed for this dimension of the project.

R12: (As recommended by the ESF Control Mission) If Action 2 and Action 3 budgets are to be revised after Round 1, there needs to be a formal process to approve the revised budgets.

R13: An ad hoc group should be established at end-2003/early-2004 to discuss the development of indicators for EQUAL in Ireland. This should contain the main stakeholders in EQUAL, including the Managing Authority, the Technical Support Structure and the Equality Authority, and other relevant expertise. Issues for the group would include the appropriate role of indicators for EQUAL, the appropriate level for these indicators to be developed (the thematic networks?) and ensuring a process is in place to develop the indicators.

R14: The North/South Steering Committee for EQUAL in Ireland should prepare a draft workplan for submission to the Summer 2004 Monitoring Committee meeting, setting out its plans for Round 2 of EQUAL, and ideas on how to better facilitate this dimension of EQUAL. These could include greater encouragement of inclusion of DPs from North and South in the formal transnational co-operation agreements, facilitated by work from the two Technical Support Structures.

R15: All of the key principles of EQUAL (partnership, transnational co-operation, innovation, empowerment and mainstreaming) should be maintained as core aspects of the programme.

R16: To support the building of DPs, projects should be encouraged to undertake formal team-building exercises during Action 1, or early in Action 2.

R17: Before their first transnational exchange visits, DPs should be encouraged to put in place a systematic process to ensure the full potential of the transnational dimension is realised. This might include pre-trip meetings where desired outputs are defined and communicated to the overseas DP hosting the visit, forms to record learning during the trip and a "de-briefing" session after the trip.

R18: While the process of establishing transnational partnerships worked well for Round 1, it may be possible to improve it further by tighter co-ordination of EQUAL between Member States. For example, timeframes and rules on eligible activity vary somewhat and Member States treat Action 1 quite differently (e.g. unlike Ireland, some cut back considerably on the number of projects at the end of Action 1, meaning Irish DPs "lost" partners they had chosen at this point).

R19: If possible, each DP's Action 1 plan should be reviewed by all local and transnational partners as the evidence suggests that partners can be a major source of innovation at this point.

R20: Efforts should be made to strengthen the understanding by DPs, and the incorporation into their projects, of the empowerment principle in Round 2. In particular, DPs should be challenged during Action 1 and early in Action 2 to increase empowerment around core project areas, project management and decision making.

R21: All Round 1 DPs should develop short written mainstreaming strategies, covering both their proposed approaches to horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. (In many projects, these already exist.) These should be reviewed by the TSS and discussed at thematic network meetings.

R22: Links should be fostered between the DPs' horizontal mainstreaming strategies and the national Mainstreaming Policy Group (i.e. the members of the latter should provide routes to accelerate the implementation of the former). To this end, DP mainstreaming strategies should be more finely focused on specific policies and/or practices within Departments and agencies, or practices in the private sector. The guidance for Round 2 of the EQUAL should provide specific criteria in this regard in terms of the selection process.

R23: The formal meetings of the Mainstreaming Policy Group (while likely to be very useful) should act as simply a starting point for EQUAL to engage with a range of policy makers. Further meetings will be needed on a one-to-one basis with members to introduce, and present, particular innovative ideas of relevance to the policy makers. This deeper level of engagement will be important if the learning arising from EQUAL is to transfer successfully to the mainstream. The ongoing work under the capacity strand of the mainstreaming strategy will also be important in terms of supporting policy makers in this area.

R24: A mechanism is needed to capture learning arising from the EU Thematic Groups of interest to labour market policy makers in Ireland.

R25: The Managing Authority should ensure that the application, selection and Action 1 phases of Round 2 (which will occur between mid-2004 and mid-2005) do not interfere with the important work of mainstreaming the learning arising from Round 1, much of which will need to take place at the same time.

Annexes

Annex 1 Data - Disadvantaged Groups

A.1.1 Introduction

Section 2.4 of this Evaluation summarises key findings of recent research relating to a number of groups in Ireland that tend to be labour-market disadvantaged. This Annex provides some further details of the findings of recent research in this regard.

A.1.2 People with Disabilities

In Q2 2002 the Central Statistics Office (CSO) produced a special Quarterly National Household Survey entitled "Disability in the Labour Force" (see table A1.1).

Age Group	In Employment	Unemployed	Not Econ. Active	Total	Percentage of persons in Employ't	Percentage of persons in Employ't (Total Pop)
15 – 24 years	11.1	1.8	17.7	30.6	36.3	45.3
25 – 34 years	22.4	2.1	15.8	40.3	55.6	81.3
35 – 44 years	24.1	1.3	22.6	48.0	50.2	76.6
45 – 54 years	28.2	1.4	38.1	67.7	41.7	70.5
55 – 64 years	22.8	0.9	60.7	84.4	27.0	48.0
<i>Total</i>	108.6	7.5	154.8	271.0	40.1	65.0

SOURCE: CSO QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, DISABILITY IN THE LABOUR FORCE, SECOND QUARTER 2002

Over 10% (271,000) of all persons aged 15 to 64 indicated that they had a longstanding health problem or disability. Although people with disabilities constitute a significant proportion of working age population, employment among this group is significantly lower than the population as a whole. Just over 40% (108,600) of all persons aged 15 to 64 with a disability/health problem were in employment. This compares to an overall rate of 65% for the total population in the same age category. Of the 108,600 persons in employment suffering from disabilities/health problems, over three quarters (81,700) of these were in full employment.

Table A1.1 shows the percentage of people with a disability/long-standing illness in employment, by age group. The 25 to 34 year age group had the highest percentage in employment at 55.6%. This figure then declines as the age group increases. The lowest rate, 27%, was reported 55 – 64 age group.

The Equality Authority commissioned a report in 2001 entitled *Research Project on the Effective Recruitment of People with Disabilities into Public Service*. The report found that while awareness actions in relation to disability were increasing, knowledge gaps remained about the capacity of people with disabilities to undertake a range of everyday jobs and occupations while specific measures to attract or engage with people with disabilities were relatively undeveloped in the recruitment process. Manual workers were identified as a group who may feel especially vulnerable about acquiring or disclosing a disability. Employees with sight impairment or a history of mental illness were mentioned as groups who might encounter prejudice in the workplace. The report made a number of recommendations involving all the relevant stakeholders to address these problems, targeting both employers and employees

A1.3 Travellers

Census 2002 established that there are almost 24,000 members of the Traveller Community. The Equality Authority commissioned a report in 2002¹⁷ which concluded that Travellers are not been identified as a potential audience for mainstream labour market programmes and that greater efforts are needed to promote access participation and outcomes for Travellers within both mainstream and targeted programmes. The report stated that there is little being done to tailor messages and media to attract travellers to programmes or to consider the group and individual needs of travellers and the long-term development of Travellers. Also, confusion exists between statutory agencies as to the division of responsibility for Traveller labour market issues.

A1.4 Older People

Table A1.2 shows the economic status of older people compared to the population as a whole. Participation rates for 55-59 year olds are similar to those of the overall participation. However, the participation rate for 60-64 year olds is considerably lower, i.e. 39.2% compared to 59.5% for the total population. Labour market participation rates at all ages are higher for males than for females. In the 60-64 age group, the participation rate is 55.5% for males, compared to 24.1% for females.

¹⁷ Pearn Kandola "Barriers Travellers Experience Accessing and Participating in Labour Market programmes", (2002).

TABLE A1.2: OLDER PEOPLE BY ILO ECONOMIC STATUS, Q2 2003 (OOO'S)

	Age Group			Total Popn
	55-59	60-64	65+	
Males				
Participation rates (%)	74.9	55.5	14.0	70.3
Labour force	77.6	43.0	26.8	1,080.6
Employed	75.2	42.3	26.8	1,029.2
Employment Rate (%)	72.7	54.5	*	74.5
Female				
Participation rates (%)	41.6	24.6	3.3	49.1
Labour force	41.9	19.4	8.2	779.1
Employed	41.1	19.0	8.1	749.1
Employment Rate (%)	40.8	24.1	-	55.4
All Persons				
Participation rates (%)	56.2	40.1	8.0	59.5
Labour force	119.5	63.2	35.0	1,859.7
Employed	116.4	62.0	34.8	1778.3
Employment Rate (%)	56.9	39.3	*	65.0
* sample too small for estimation				
SOURCE: CSO QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, Q2 2003				

The Central Services Agency produced "Labour Market Inequalities for Older People in Ireland" in 2002. The report highlighted a number of barriers faced by older people in relation to the labour market. These include:

- **qualifications:** Emphasis on qualification rather than the value of experience held by older people;
- **skills mismatch:** Perception that skills and competencies of older people were out of touch with what is required in the modern economy;
- **access to training-** suitability and costs are seen as a barrier;
- **availability/quality of jobs** – a lack of quality/suitable jobs acts as a disincentive to accessing job opportunities/returning to work;
- **compulsory retirement age** - acts as a structural barrier;
- **attitudinal barriers-** principally those towards old people from young people and employers.

A number of other reports have been produced in this area over the last number of years¹⁸. These reports raise similar issues to those listed above. They also raise a number of further, which include:

¹⁸ National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) "Labour market Issues for Older Workers" (2002); PACEC "Labour Market Participation of the over-55, A Report of the Export Group on Future Skills needs", (2002); Equality Authority "Implementing Equality for Older People" (2002).

- **"work life balance"**: Government, employers, trade unions and employees should encourage the development of a new "work life balance" to facilitate older workers who seek more flexible, atypical work patterns. FÁS in its Statement of Strategy 2002-05 refers to this as "downshifting" work requirements (Equality Authority);
- **increased female participation**: the scope for increased participation was greater for older women than for older men, due to women's current low levels of participation. It is also greater for those living outside Dublin than for those in Dublin, again because current activity rates are lower in the regions (PACEC);
- **targeted Initiatives (DETE)**: DETE should coordinate the identification of a series of new initiatives targeting older workers and older people seeking to return to work in each annual national action plan under the EU Employment Guidelines (Equality Authority);
- **targeted traineeships**: FÁS in partnership with employers and trade unions should adapt a number of traineeships to the needs of older workers as positive actions to facilitate their return to work (Equality Authority);
- **targeted education**: FÁS, VECs and third level education institutions should greater tailor some education and training provision to the specific needs of older people (Equality Authority);
- **early intervention**: early intervention, aimed at improving retention and employability will deter – or at least delay – discouragement and lack of encouragement as workers get older. Retention in employment is easier to achieve than encouraging back to work those who have already left (NESF);
- **training in and for the workplace**: This is key to employment entry and sustainability. The main barriers to training for those in mid-life are: low levels of provision; lack of clarity around the responsibility for training provision; access to and take-up of opportunities by those in mid-life; and lack of targeted provision, especially for women returners and older long-term unemployed men (NESF);
- **Pensions/Social Security Provision**: This influences people's decision on when to retire. There is a lack of provision in current pension systems for gradual retirement (NESF).

The NCAOP study *Older People's Preferences for Employment and Retirement in Ireland* highlights the most common reasons for early retirement. The most common reasons given for early retirement are illness or disability (29%), financial incentives offered by employers/people can afford to do so (27%) and work being too demanding or stressful (13%). The numbers leaving work early due to illness could be reduced if workers were moved to more suitable jobs, the study suggests.

A1.5 Refugees

The Labour Market Needs and experiences of Minority Ethnic groups, Particularly Refugees., in Ireland explores the labour market experiences of minority ethnic groups and identifies ways to facilitate labour

market access and participation. It lists a number of barriers to labour access market faced by refugees, including:

- language skills;
- lack of information on employment and training services;
- lack of knowledge about the job search culture and the labour market;
- discrimination;
- employers lack of understanding of legal knowledge
- non-recognition of qualifications obtained overseas.

A1.6 Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals

The Equality Authority's report "*Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals*" states that many lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have experienced discrimination and prejudice at work, including experiences of hostility, exclusion and harassment, discrimination in relation to promotions and working conditions and in a number of cases dismissals, based on their sexual orientation. The report cites GLEN/Nexus research of 101 lesbians and gay men, of which only 42 were employed.

When questioned about their previous employment 53% of respondents felt that disclosure of their sexual orientation would have led to discrimination. The report had a number of policy and implementation recommendations to target problems experienced by LGB in accessing and sustaining employment. These were aimed at the relevant labour market stakeholders and include: DETE; trade unions; employers; FÁS and other State agencies in the provision of training and education; and the Equality Authority.

The 2003 NESF report "Equality policies for Lesbians, gay people and Bisexual People: Implementation Issues" reiterated and expanded on the report.

A1.7 Lone Parents

QHNS data shows that there were 173,500 lone parents in Q2 2003. Of these, 76,200 (44%) were in employment, 5,500 (3%) were unemployed and 91,800 (52%) were not economically active. The 2001 NESF report "Lone Parents" identified a number of current barriers to lone parents entering the labour force including lack of child care provision; lack of flexibility in the design and delivery of active labour market programmes by FÁS and other agencies; and a lack of family friendly policies. Besides recommendations on these barriers, the report made further recommendations on education, training and work issues. It stated that the National Employment Services Advisory Committee should play a role in mainstreaming the learning from pilot labour market programmes. Targeted active labour market programmes should be made accessible to lone parents. Also, in the assessment of the needs of lone parents, the LES network and progression should be built into the options developed by the main delivery agencies.

Annex 2 DP Survey Questionnaire



Introduction

1. Name of DP _____
2. Name of Interviewee _____
3. Position of Interviewee _____
4. Type of Interview Telephone ___
 Case Study ___

Progress to Date

5. When did your DP appoint a project manager?

Summer 2002

Autumn 2002

Winter 2002

Spring 2003

6. What has the project achieved in terms of implementation to date?

7. How does your project's progress compare to your original project plan? (And if they are different, why has the divergence occurred?)

Content

Time Schedule

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE EOUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME

8. Do you think EQUAL gives projects a sufficient time period to implement their projects?

Yes ____

No ____

Comment _____

Partnership

(i) History

9. Did any two or more of your partners work with each other before this EQUAL project?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't Know ____

(ii) Distribution of Power in the DP

10. In practice, does one, or a small number, of the partners on your project take the lead in implementing the project?

Yes ____

No ____

Comment _____

11. How does this "lead role" for these partner(s) manifest itself?

12. Why did these particular "lead partners" emerge (and not others)?

13. How often does the wider DP meet as a group?

14. Is there a mechanism for keeping wider DP members informed of ongoing progress?

Yes ____

No ____

Explain _____

(iii) Project Manager

15. Is the Project Manager based:

In the offices of one of the DP member organisations? ____

In an independent project office? ____

16. Was the project manager:

Seconded from one of the organisations in the DP? ____

Recruited anew from outside any of the DP organisations? ____

17. To whom does the Project Manager report?

Day-to-day _____

More generally _____

18. What is the division of responsibilities between the Project Manager and the DP partner organisations? (E.g. Do the partner organisations let the Project Manager get on with implementation or do they adopt a "hands-on" role in undertaking actions themselves?)

19. Do you think the idea of having a DP works on an EQUAL project (i.e. having a "partnership" rather than having projects implemented by one organisation)?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't know ____

Why and what have been the additional benefits of partnership (if any)?

20. How could the idea be improved for Round 2 (2004-06) projects?

Transnationality

(i) Transnational Partnership

21. How would you describe the type and intensity of your transnational co-operation, is it?

- Exchange of information and experience (networking etc.) ____
- Parallel development of innovative approaches (doing the same thing in different countries and comparing ideas/progress) ____
- Import/export of new approaches (providing a solution developed in Ireland to a partner or testing a solution developed elsewhere in Ireland) ____
- Joint development with a common objective (almost one "international" project) ____

22. Does the project involve the exchange of trainees/trainers/staff (i.e. for longer periods than for the normal transnational visits)?

Yes ____

No ____

23. What have been the outcomes of transnational co-operation and have these been different from what was originally planned?

24. Has transnational co-operation brought any additional contribution(s) to the project?

Yes

No

Don't know

If yes, explain

25. Regarding the exchange of good practice, do you feel your DP:

Primarily receives good practice transfer from its international partners? ____

Primarily gives good practice to its international partners? ____

Exchange of ideas and good practice is about the same in both directions ____

26. If you could spend less on the transnational dimension of the project, and transfer that money to other aspects of the project, would you do so?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't know ____

Explain your answer

(ii) Northern Ireland

27. Have you had any co-operation with organisations in Northern Ireland as part of your EQUAL project?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't know ____

28. Have these contacts:

Been facilitated by EQUAL? ____

Come about through other routes? ____

29. Have you heard of the Special EU Programmes Body and its role regarding cross-border co-operation and EQUAL?

Yes ____

No ____

30. What do you think of the performance to date of the SEUPB in this regard?

Innovation

31. All EQUAL projects are supposed to pilot some new things. What new things are your project doing?

32. Which of the following types of innovation do you feel apply to your project (tick more than one if applicable):

- Innovation about Processes, i.e. the project is not trying to achieve new objectives but is trying to achieve existing objectives in new or improved ways ____

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE EOUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME

- Innovation about Goals, i.e. the project is trying to achieve new objectives (e.g. a new subject area, a new target group etc.) ____
- Innovation about Context, i.e. trying to alter in some way the political or institutional context in which the issues are addressed ____

33. If 1 is Low and 4 is Very High, how would you score the innovation of your project between 1 and 4?

34. What factors influenced the type and level of innovation on your project?

35. Have the members of the DP been important to the project's innovation?

Yes ____

No ____

How? _____

36. Have your transnational partners been important to the project's innovation?

Yes ____

No ____

How? _____

Equality

37. Do you take gender equality into account in your project?

Yes ____

No ____

38. If Yes, how?

39. Do you take equality in relation to any of the other "nine grounds" into account? (Age, race, , disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, membership of the Travelling Community, religious belief)

()

Yes ____

If Yes, which grounds? _____

No ____

40. If Yes, how?

Empowerment

41. Have you tried to apply the concept of "empowerment" to your project?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't know ____

42. If Yes, what does "empowerment" mean for your project?

43. Have the project target groups been involved in steering the project?

Yes, they are centrally involved in all discussions ____

Yes, they have an important role ____

Yes, but their role is low ____

No, they receive benefits from the project but do not have a role in steering it ____

44. What has the reaction of the target group(s) been to the project to date?

Impact and Mainstreaming

(i) Impact

45. To date, has your project impacted on individuals from EQUAL target groups?

Yes ____

No ____

46. If so, do you have any measurements for this?

Hard Outcomes (data)

Soft Outcomes (distance travelled)

47. Has the project had any impact on your (or any other) organisations yet?

Yes ____

No ____ If Yes, what are they?

48. Has your project had any other impacts to date? Is yes, what are they?

(ii) Horizontal Mainstreaming

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE EOUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME

49. How are you documenting project outcomes?

50. Are you planning to undertake an evaluation at the level of your project? (i.e. have a written document outlining objectives, successes, failures, processes etc., which could underpin the mainstreaming process)

Yes

No

Don't know

51. At a local or sectoral level, or to other organisations similar to your own, do you have a clear strategy for disseminating the results and innovations coming from your project?

Yes

No

52. Has this strategy been written down?

Yes

No

53. Whether written down or not, what will the strategy involve?

54. Will the partners in your DP play a role in this dissemination?

No role, done centrally by Project Manager and one organisation

Will play role

If role, please explain

55. Have you already initiated any transfers/dissemination at local/regional levels?

Yes

No

If yes, what are they?

56. What obstacles/barriers were encountered if any?

57. What local/national bodies have been involved in dissemination?

(iii) Vertical Mainstreaming

58. Do you plan to check or validate the results emerging from your project in any way? (i.e. can we be sure that the results will hold more generally?)

59. Do you have a clear strategy for influencing national policy in relation to your project's innovation?

Yes ____

No ____

Project not applicable to national policy ____

60. If Yes, is this strategy written down?

Yes ____

No ____

61. Whether written down or not, what will this strategy involve?

62. Have you already initiated any transfers/dissemination at national level?

Yes

No

If yes, what are they?

63. Are you a member of a thematic group under EQUAL in Ireland?

Yes ____

No ____

64. Do you think this thematic group is useful for influencing policy?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't know ____

If Yes, how?

65. Do you have any suggestions as to how the thematic groups could be improved?

66. Are you involved in any EU thematic group?

Yes ____

No ____

Don't know ____

67. If Yes, what is the impact of this involvement likely to be for your project?

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME

68. Any suggestions to improve the EU thematic groups?

Administration

69. On a scale of 1-4 (1 being poor and 4 being excellent), how would you rate the performance of the Technical Support Structure (WRC) to date? ____

70. What is the TSS particularly good at?

71. In what area(s) could the TSS could improve its performance?

General

72. Are there any other comments you would like to make about EQUAL, or anything you would like to see different for Round 2 (2004-06)?

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Annex 3 EQUAL Indicators in Programme Complement

The measure overviews attached to the EQUAL Programme Complement¹⁹ contain indicative indicators for EQUAL, with specific indicators for each of the six themes chosen for EQUAL in Ireland. The indicator tables in each case have two important footnotes:

- "The EQUAL Initiative operates on the bottom-up principle. Therefore, while the strategic and operational aims of the programme are apparent, the precise manner in which these will be achieved is not. Successful DPs will dictate the "means" to the various ends. At this point, prior to the selection of the DPs, it is clearly not possible to quantify a baseline situation and, consequently, not possible to project into the future (mid-term, final target). What we have outlined in the table(s) are probable/indicative indicators in each 'class' although we are clearly unable to quantify them. The reader should also be aware that actions under EQUAL are project based and that there will be two calls for proposals and therefore two stages of action, i.e. 2001-04 and 2004-06;
- it will be particularly difficult to measure impact under EQUAL given the project driven nature of the Initiative. The measurement of impact will depend on the quality of the final evaluation and on other research inputs (promoted through the Technical Assistance Measure). Such inputs will be critically important to ensuring a significant mainstreaming outcome".

Given these caveats, the Programme Complement presents the indicative indicators shown below.

¹⁹ The EQUAL Programme Complement, and the measure overviews, are available at www.equal-ci.ie/res/ed.html

TABLE A.3.1 INDICATIVE INDICATORS FOR EQUAL, BY THEME

Employability	
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of projects by training/development category (guidance, counselling, training etc.) ▪ No. of persons benefiting from intervention (counselling, guidance, training etc.) to be delineated (at least) by age, sex, ethnicity, employment status, educational status and, where appropriate, disability type ▪ No. of persons completing training programmes delineated as above
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of innovative or customised approaches (projects) to accommodate needs of target groups ▪ % of participants placed in employment at end of intervention (delineated as above) ▪ % of participants progressing to further education and training (delineated as above) ▪ Level of certification and/or accreditation associated with training inputs achieved by beneficiaries (delineated as above) ▪ No. of new forms of certification/accreditation of learning/training developed ▪ Uptake of careers guidance by target group
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in employment status of beneficiaries by target group ▪ No. of projects suitable for mainstreaming ▪ No. of projects mainstreamed ▪ Durability of employment/progression outcomes for target groups (delineated as above)
Entrepreneurship	
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of people trained in entrepreneurial skills delineated by rural/urban location and (at least) by age, sex, ethnicity, employment status, educational status and, where appropriate, disability type ▪ No. of business start ups by sector and urban/rural location and (at least) by age, sex, ethnicity, employment status, educational status and, if appropriate, disability type ▪ No. of mentoring relationships set up, delineated as above ▪ No. of community-based enterprise projects
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of income generated by business start-ups delineated as above ▪ Increased representation of participants from currently under-represented groups on public self-employment programmes for groups ▪ No. and type of successfully mainstreamed interventions
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of jobs created (in addition to owner/manager) ▪ Improvement in equality of access to public self-employment programmes for groups currently under-represented ▪ Level of new enterprise types in urban and rural disadvantaged areas
Adaptability (Theme 1) – Life-long Learning	
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of projects by flexible work practice category (life-long learning, family friendly practice, uptake of e-assistance) ▪ No., age, sex, ethnicity, employment position (management, professional, technical, clerical, operative), employment status (p/t, f/t temporary, temporary, permanent) of beneficiaries ▪ Category of project by size and sector of enterprise
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uptake of off-the-job training by group and type of training (management, professional technical, clerical, operative) ▪ Uptake of on-the-job training by group and category of training ▪ Completion of off-the-job training by group and type of training and accreditation/certification (management, professional technical, clerical, operative) ▪ Completion of on-the-job training by group and type of training and accreditation/certification (management, professional technical, clerical, operative) ▪ Introduction of flexible work practices by type of practice, size and sector of enterprise ▪ Uptake of flexible work practices by type of practice and target group

TABLE A.3.1 INDICATIVE INDICATORS FOR EQUAL, BY THEME

Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in employment position of beneficiaries by target group ▪ Change in employment progression by target group ▪ Sustainability of flexible work practices by enterprise size and sector ▪ Retention rate of beneficiaries compared to non-beneficiaries and baseline ▪ No. of projects suitable for mainstreaming ▪ No. of projects mainstreamed
Adaptability (Theme 2) – Adapting to New Technologies	
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New work practices introduced ▪ No. of vulnerable workers trained ▪ New technologies introduced
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobility levels of vulnerable workers ▪ Level of accreditation/certification for vulnerable workers ▪ Levels of acceptance of new work practices and technologies
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Durability of new work practices ▪ Medium-term promotion and job mobility trends among vulnerable workers
Equal Opportunities	
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of people trained in childcare by rural/urban location and (at least) by age, sex, ethnicity, employment status, educational status and, where appropriate, disability type ▪ No. and type of innovative childcare initiatives (in-company, community based etc.) ▪ No. and type of gender awareness programmes introduced ▪ No. and type of innovative family friendly policies developed and piloted
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of take-up of childcare facilities by characteristic of parent (age, family status, educational status etc.) ▪ Level of take-up of innovative family friendly policies ▪ No. of people acquiring childcare accreditation/certification delineated as above ▪ Level of dissemination of awareness programmes
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree of noted improvement in gender equitable distribution of opportunities in companies ▪ Extent to which traditional gender based wage differentials have narrowed ▪ Increase in levels of retention of staff across various categories relating to age, gender, family status etc.
Asylum Seekers	
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of language classes for asylum seekers ▪ No. of other training inputs for asylum seekers ▪ No. of asylum seekers attending provision ▪ Range of services to follow-up services put in place
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in take-up of follow-up places ▪ Degree of satisfaction with cultural appropriateness of inputs/interventions
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take-up of research findings ▪ Mainstreaming of innovations

SOURCE: EQUAL PROGRAMME COMPLEMENT, MEASURE OVERVIEWS