

EQUAL in practice

Handbook for the implementation of EQUAL in new Member States



EQUAL

European Commission
DG Employment and social affairs :B

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Preface

Ten new Member States (NMS) will join the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI) in spring 2004. They will join the EU in time to take part, as fully fledged members, at the next call for proposals of EQUAL in autumn 2004, together with the current EU 15 Member States (MS).

Given the transnational dimension, which is one of the assets of this instrument, EQUAL will enhance a close exchange at all levels, between national, regional and local administrations, NGOs and employers and thus enhance the integration process of the future member States.

As experience has shown in current MS, the establishment of appropriate mechanisms and structures is an essential factor for the successful implementation and management of the CI - as of any EU funded programme. It is hard to overestimate the energy and time needed to set up these structures and develop the necessary administrative capacities. This handbook is designed to help policy makers and administrators in the NMS to prepare for this task.

EQUAL is financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), one of the EU Structural Funds. The principles and procedures guiding the use of the Structural Funds differ from those for current programmes delivered in candidate countries, such as the Phare programme. The main differences are:

- integrated programming, rather than separate projects based support ;
- multi-annual programming, in contrast to the one-year planning cycle under Phare;
- the need for a specific set of planning and programming documents (National Development Plans, community support frameworks, operational plans and single programming documents);
- territorial and sectoral programmes for the mainstream programmes, national programmes for EQUAL;

- implementation by the country's own authorities;
- responsibilities and obligations to audit and monitor activity at Member State level;
- Commission control of effect after intervention (ex post) instead of beforehand (ex-ante).

The information in this handbook is particularly relevant for the candidate countries that will join the EU in 2004. At the same time the European Commission¹ encourages Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey to participate in the transnational activities of EQUAL at project level as well as at the level of the European thematic networks. They can make use of the pre-accession funds, following the example of Hungary and the Czech Republic as described below.

This handbook aims to show how EQUAL can be organised and managed to achieve maximum benefit with manageable inputs. It incorporates experience from current Member States, the Czech Republic and Hungary to provide practical examples of proven systems. Two countries were particularly helpful. The authors visited Finland and Portugal in order to get first hand information on the implementation of EQUAL from two countries that are comparable in size to most of the Candidate Countries. Both countries gave tremendous support and frank responses to the numerous questions on the organisation, management and delivery of EQUAL.

We would also like to thank the Czech and Hungarian EQUAL authorities for their comments on a draft version of the handbook. Both countries are already participating in EQUAL with financial support from Phare. We hope that their experience, as well as information collected from other countries, will be of use to the NMS that are preparing for EQUAL.

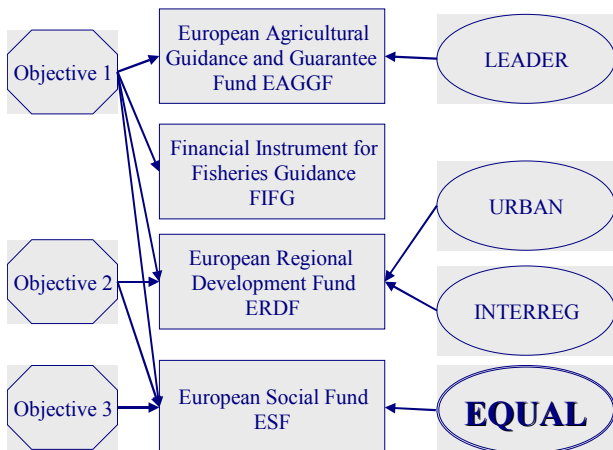
The handbook starts with a brief introduction to the EQUAL programme and moves to the organisational structure needed to implement the Initiative (Brief 2). Brief 3 outlines the key elements

of preparation before explaining how EQUAL is delivered in practice (Briefs 4-6). The present role of monitoring and evaluation is then described in Brief 7 as an illustration of how this tool can be used. The final requirements for the future on evaluation of EQUAL remain to be decided at the time of writing the handbook. Finally, Brief 8 explains some of the financial issues concerning EQUAL.

The handbook is published by the European Commission's EQUAL unit, of the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs. The work was supported by two researchers from the ECORYS Group Ms Marjolein Peters and Ms Vicky Davies.

1.1 Background

Figure 1.1 Community Initiatives and Structural Funds



The Structural Funds are the financial instruments used in the European Union (EU) to promote social and economic cohesion. The structural funds contribute to the attainment of the three following objectives:

- promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind (Objective 1);
- supporting the economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties (Objective 2); and
- supporting the adaptation and modernisation of policies and systems of education, training and employment (Objective 3).

In addition to the above objectives – that are implemented through the 'Mainstream operational programmes' – 3% of the structural funds are earmarked to the Community Initiatives. EQUAL is one of the Community Initiatives and is financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), as shown in figure 1.1. Unlike the Mainstream programmes it operates at the national level in all MS. Its predecessors were called EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT. Other current

Community Initiatives are INTERREG, URBAN and LEADER.

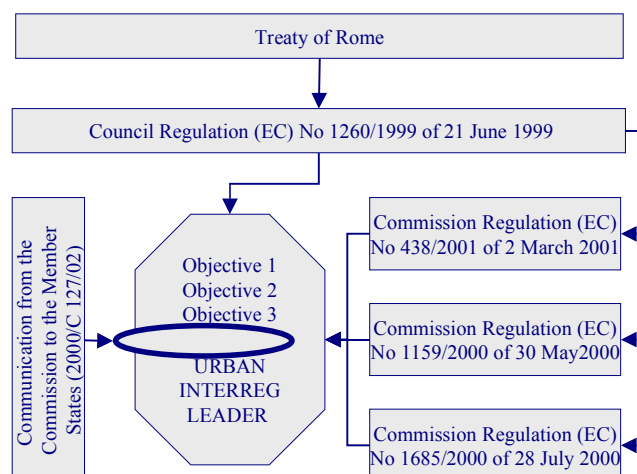
The creation of the European Social Fund was foreseen in the Treaty of Rome, the 1957 treaty that laid the foundation for the EU.

In 1997, the EU Heads of State agreed to strive for a high level of employment and to co-ordinate their actions at a European level. The European Employment Strategy (EES) was subsequently adopted. Since 1997, the European Council of labour ministers provides an annual report on the measures taken to implement the EES.

The ESF is the instrument to support the EES. The strategy sets the political framework for EQUAL, which mirrors the main priorities in the EQUAL themes. Furthermore EQUAL is a means to support the employment and social policy priorities established in the annual National Action Plans for Employment and Social Inclusion (NAP Employment and NAP Inclusion). Candidate countries have joined the EU dialogue on a co-ordinated Employment and Inclusion policy. The Joint Assessment Papers and the Joint Inclusion Memoranda that derive from this dialogue is also an important political framework for the future EQUAL programmes

1.2 The legal framework ruling EQUAL

Figure 1.2 Regulations governing EQUAL



EQUAL, as a Community Initiative, is governed by the Structural Funds regulations. The main

regulation is the general regulation of the European Council (No. 1260/1999). This regulation lays down all the general provisions of the Structural Funds. In addition the tasks of the ESF are governed by a separate regulation often referred to as the "ESF regulation" (1784/99). There is also four implementation regulations that provide more detailed rules for specific areas, as described in table 1.1 below:

The Commission also prepared specific guidelines for EQUAL in a Communication to the Member States². These are commonly referred to as 'the EQUAL Guidelines'.

Table 1.1 summarises the contents of the key documents mentioned above. Other references are given throughout this handbook, where appropriate.

Table 1.1 General reference documents for EQUAL

Formal Reference Details	Title	Contents and Use
General regulation governing the Structural Funds		
Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999.	Laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.	All the formal rules applying to Structural Funds and hence EQUAL. Ranges from eligibility to financial management. Important reference material.
Rules governing the European Social Fund (including EQUAL)		
Council and EP Regulation (EC) No. 1784/1999 of 12 July 1999	Specific rules on the implementation of the ESF	Laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the ESF
Specific regulations governing the Structural Funds		
Commission Regulation (EC) No. 438/2001 of 2 March 2001. Amended by regulation 2355/2002	Laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) 1260/1999 regarding the management and control systems for assistance	Detailed instructions for the financial management of the funds under the general regulation. Undoubtedly, the second most important regulation

Formal Reference Details	Title	Contents and Use
	granted under the Structural Funds.	for the management of EQUAL.
Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1159/2000 of 30 May 2000.	On information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds.	Further information on the obligations regarding when and who to inform, communications action plan, and instructions on concrete public relations activities.
Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1685/2000 of 28 July 2000.	Laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 as regards eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the Structural Funds.	Goes into detail about which expenditures can be reimbursed and what is required for money to be paid.
Commission regulation (EC) No 448/2001	Giving details about financial corrections	
Commission regulation (EC) No 643/2000	Using the Euro	Gives details about the currency conversion
Specific rules governing EQUAL		
Communication from the Commission to the Member States (2000/C 127/02).	Establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market.	Specific guidance on the aim, objectives, principles and implementation of EQUAL.

1.3 The Aims of EQUAL

EQUAL aims to address all causes of discrimination and inequality in the labour market, and the associated social exclusion. The Initiative is intended to complement national strategies and other EU employment policies, focusing on:

- the development and testing of innovative approaches in labour market and social inclusion policies; and
- the exchange of experience between partners from different countries.

1.4 The EQUAL Principles

Six general principles govern the EQUAL programme, as follows:

- **Thematic approach**

Nine themes are currently covered by EQUAL³. Since they are explained in detail both in general information and in chapter/fiche number three of the Transnationality guide, we do not explain them in detail here. Eight of these themes are derived from the EES and the ninth, concerning asylum seekers, is included on top. Each country chooses the priorities for its programme from these themes. A Development Partnership must select one of the themes as its focus. [N.B. The 2002 review of the EES led to a revised structure with 3 objectives and 10 priorities. However given the close relationship between the EQUAL themes and the 10 new priorities EQUAL will continue to work along the themes set out in the original EQUAL Communication]

- **Innovation**

Each development partnership must contribute to the innovation of policies or their implementation. Innovation can occur in different ways and may cover: policy objectives;

tools and methods; delivery; and the institutional structure.

- **Partnership**

EQUAL is delivered by Development Partnerships (DPs). These partnerships bring together a range of organisations to design and deliver a coherent strategy to address a specific cause of discrimination and/or inequality in the labour market. The partnership should be inclusive, including all relevant organisations for the activities proposed. Partnerships may operate in a geographical area or in a specific sector.

- **Empowerment**

Each partner should be actively involved in the DP and must be able to participate fully in the decision-making. All individuals or groups targeted by the work of a DP should also be involved in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of activities delivered by a DP.

- **Mainstreaming**

The results and experiences of DPs must be collated and analysed so that the lessons can be integrated into current policy and practice.

- **Transnationality**

DPs from different countries are expected to work together to develop joint activities, exchange information and experience and to share good practice through EQUAL.

1.5 Implementing EQUAL

EQUAL is implemented in four phases or actions:

- **Action 1**

This is the starting phase, which will in most cases last no more than six months, to consolidate a DP and its relation with partnerships in other countries.

- **Action 2**

The key phase of delivery, in which the partnership's work programme is carried out. This phase lasts for 18 to 36 months.

- **Action 3**

Action 3 involves networking, dissemination and mainstreaming activities. These activities tend to be based around particular themes, are organised at the national level and link with similar activities at the European level.

- **Action 4**

Technical assistance activities to support and monitor implementation of the Community Initiative Programme make up Action 4. This action is discussed further in Brief 2 on the organisational structure for EQUAL.

Actions 1 and 2 are consecutive. Action 3 operates in parallel to Action 2 while Action 4 runs throughout the whole programme, including before the start of Action 1.

Like other Structural Funds the programming period runs from 2000-2006, and expenditure is eligible until 2008. However - given the transnational nature of EQUAL, the programme is structured in two rounds with a common start-date across the EU. It is anticipated that the NMS will join the second round that is intended to be launched in 2004 with the DPs being funded from January 2005.

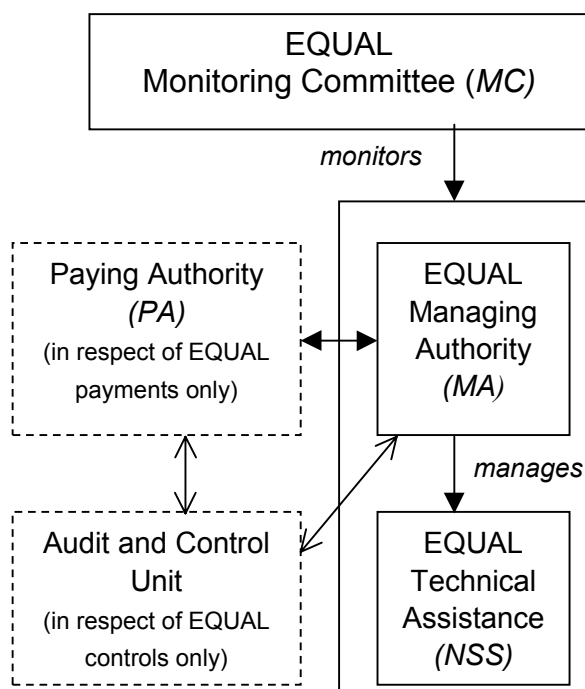
1.6 Further Reading

- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).
- Regulation on ESF implementation (No 1784/99)
- Communication from the Commission to the Member States establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market ([2000/C 127/02](#)).
- [EQUAL Guide on Transnationality](#), available under published documents in the library section of the Commission's EQUAL website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

2.1 General Overview

This brief explains the implementation structure that you need to adopt for EQUAL. The general regulation (No. 1260/1999) is particularly important here, outlining the different institutions involved and their respective tasks. The main body is the Managing Authority. Specific funds are available to provide support to the Managing Authority known as 'Technical Assistance'. Technical Assistance can be used to fund different types of activities (see chapter 8 for details) and notably the resources to run a National Support Structure. You will also need to set up a Monitoring Committee, and ensure that the ESF Paying Authority and Audit and Control Unit are fully involved in playing their correct roles, as shown in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 The EQUAL implementation structure



The rest of this brief is dedicated to explaining the role of these different parts of the implementation structure. There are two general points to consider throughout:

- The components of the implementation structure.

Developing implementation bodies goes beyond designing a structure. Structure refers to a clear assignment of responsibilities and tasks to bodies or departments within that structure. Attention should also be given to the human resources, systems and tools employed within the structure⁴.

For human resources, you will need to look at the number and qualifications of staff, their tasks, responsibilities and job descriptions. Strategies to recruit and retain experienced, skilled and motivated staff are also important. Systems and tools refer to a wide range of job-aids such as guidelines, manuals, (IT) systems, instruments, methods, procedures, forms etc. These aids make the knowledge held by an individual more explicit so that it can be shared with others. Such systems and tools increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce an organisation's vulnerability when, for example, key staff leave. Human resources are discussed in this brief and tips on the different systems or tools that can be used for EQUAL are provided throughout the Handbook.

- Making the most of existing resources.

Devising an organisational structure for EQUAL was relatively easy for the current Member States of the European Union (EU). These Member States could use existing structures in place for the European Social Fund (ESF) and could build on their previous experience of EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT. New member states, however, are in the process of developing these structures alongside their preparation for EQUAL. Regular contact between the responsible officials at different levels should be maintained to help with this process and to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'. **You are strongly advised to combine resources and/or effort wherever possible but**

without contravening any legislation.

Opportunities for such combinations are suggested throughout this brief. The most obvious one being to keep the programme as simple as possible and to **limit the number of themes** in which to focus your EQUAL programme. This also means that it is better to gather several DPs in two themes for example than to spread them with difficulties to share experiences between DPs. It is equally important to ensure that lessons from EQUAL can benefit the other ESF activities in your country. It is also important to ensure consistency between mainstream ESF programs and EQUAL.

2.2 Preparing the Community Initiative Programme and Programme Complement

You must prepare a programme for the implementation of EQUAL before its launch. This programme, which has the shape of a Single Programming Document, is known as the 'Community Initiative Programme' (CIP) and is supplemented by a Programme Complement⁵. The CIP should take the form of a single programming document and must clearly set out all aspects of the Initiative⁶. The CIP forms part of the formal Commission Decision on the contribution to the Programme in each Member State, and can thus only be subsequently altered with the agreement of the Commission. The CIP must be agreed and adopted by the European Commission. While the Managing Authority can start the information work after formally submitting the draft CIP to the Commission it cannot launch the calls for proposal before adoption of the CIP (see chapter 8 for details). Table 2.1 presents the key headings to be covered by your CIP. It also provides some tips on how to meet the requirements in a way that will limit input while maintaining your programme's integrity.

The Programme Complement contains additional detailed information on the implementation at measure level, selection criteria etc. The document is approved by the Monitoring Committee but may be altered on the initiative of the Managing Authority. The CIP must be agreed and adopted by the European Commission and

the Program complement needs to be decided by the Monitoring committee before EQUAL is launched in your country.

The Commission has developed a model CIP that can be requested at:

empl-equal-info@cec.eu.int.

There is no standard way to prepare an EQUAL CIP. There are, however, three specific recommendations from experience in current Member States:

► Involve high level officials

Putting high-level officials on a preparatory committee will speed up the process. These officials are able to cut through some of the usual 'red tape'. In Finland, for example, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Labour headed the Steering Group that prepared EQUAL and the new Objective 3 programme of the ESF.

► Involve stakeholders from the beginning

The EQUAL principle of 'Empowerment' should be applied already at this stage of the programme design. Thus the administrations should involve all parties that have an interest in the programme at an early stage. Not only will this avoid objections and delays at a later stage as it will enable a more realistic reflection in the CIP of the needs on the ground. Consultations should include other ministries (e.g. Ministry for equal opportunities, education, economy, social affairs) that may be involved in the preparation of Mainstream ESF OPs or cover a particular aspect of EQUAL as well as social partners and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Box 2.1 Involving other ministries in the preparation of EQUAL in Finland

The Finnish Managing Authority, based in the Ministry of Labour, made a concerted effort to develop intensive co-operation with the two 'neighbouring' ministries: the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry for Education. They consulted these ministries from the very beginning and made sure that

they were involved in the selection of the priority themes for Finland.

Box 2.2 Involving stakeholders in the preparation of EQUAL in Portugal

Portugal set up a Management Committee (in addition to the Monitoring Committee) to support and advise the Managing Authority and National Support Structure. The Management Committee is relatively small and meets more regularly than the Monitoring Committee. Representatives on the Management Committee include:

- Directorate-General for Employment & Vocational Training;
- Directorate-General for Solidarity & Social Security;
- Department for Studies, Forecasting & Planning, Ministry of Social Security and Labour;
- Institute of Employment & Vocational Training;
- Institute for Innovation in Training;
- Institute for Social Development; and
- Institute for ESF Management.

All countries are required to consult with all relevant individuals and organisations in the preparation of their CIP⁷. This should involve both internal but more importantly also external stakeholders. Consultation is extremely valuable, bringing together a wide range of knowledge and expertise. It is particularly important to involve those organisations that represent people who face discrimination and inequality in the labour market so that they can influence the CIP's preparation. Meetings and hearings with such organisations will help to determine need and

clarify the specific issues influencing discrimination in your country. This will help you to decide on the priorities to be adopted by your CIP, improve the overall quality of the document and help to prepare for implementation. As one of the Portuguese NSS officials says:

“We began by asking how EQUAL can be used to solve our country's problems. Empowerment is not just about involving the ultimate beneficiaries in the implementation, but also entails asking their views at an early stage.”

Involving other organisations and working with them is not always easy. The best approach is to identify the right person within an organisation: does he or she carry enough weight? Are they motivated? This is often easier for smaller organisations than large, bureaucratic institutions.

► Check national legal framework

New member states need to make sure that EQUAL is in line with the existing national legal framework before full implementation. Experience in current Member States shows that specific attention must be given to the concept of Development Partnerships and how payments are made.

Box 2.3 Fitting in with the national legal framework in Finland

The Finnish Ministry of Labour assigned the financial transactions with Development Partnership to the labour market departments of the fifteen regional Employment and Economic Development Centres.

Table 2.1 Contents of the CIP and suggestions for its preparation

Required Contents of the CIP	Suggestions for Preparation
Introduction and brief summary	
General information on the programming process, including consultation undertaken.	
The labour market	
Analysis of the labour market. Analysis of labour market discrimination and inequality in relation to the chosen themes, including asylum seekers.	For labour market analyses in general: ► Use existing information from Eurostat, EU institutions, OECD (employment outlook), ILO

Required Contents of the CIP	Suggestions for Preparation
	<p>(Central and Eastern European Team: ILO – CEET).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use materials already prepared by your country for the EU, such as the Joint Assessments of Employment Policy and ESF Mainstream programmes <p>For analyses of discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use analyses for the priorities for fighting discrimination for Accession Partnerships, and annual ‘regular reports’ to the Commission.
The policy context	
Description of relevant European and national policies, including the Joint Assessment Paper on employment policies (JAP) and the Progress Reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use materials already prepared by your country for the EU, such as analyses for Objective 1 & 3 and Joint Assessments.
Priority themes	
Statement of strategy and priorities, on the basis of the thematic fields described in the Commission Communication on EQUAL (point 16).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Limit the number of priority areas (themes). ▶ Note the expectation that Member States will choose at least one thematic field in each pillar. However, NMS may want to focus on 2 or 3 key areas rather than all 4 pillars, this is particularly true of those countries with small budgets. Any variation like this needs to be negotiated with the Commission, as happened for Luxembourg prioritised two themes (plus Asylum Seekers) ▶ All countries are expected to plan a minimum level of action for asylum seekers⁸. ▶ Limit the number of DPs by encouraging and favouring large DPs in your call for proposals.
Assessment of the expected impact of the strategy, including impact on the social and economic situation at local or sectoral level and in terms of equality between women and men.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use ex-ante evaluations for other Structural Funds programmes as a basis.
Leading principles of EQUAL	
Description of how you plan to implement the principles, including gender mainstreaming.	
Actions under EQUAL	
A description of Actions 1-4.	
CIP implementation	
The provisions for the implementation of the programme: Managing Authority, financial management, systems for monitoring and evaluation, Monitoring Committee, audits.	See sections 2.3-2.6 below for further information.
Financial issues	
An indicative financial plan, per year and for each priority measure.	
Monitoring and Evaluation	

2.3 Managing Authority and National Support Structure

2.3.1 Managing Authority

The Managing Authority has overall and final responsibility, at national level, for the implementation of EQUAL. new member states must designate an appropriate Managing Authority⁹. It is possible and advisable that the Managing Authority for the ESF OPs manages also the EQUAL programme.

Structural Fund requirements

The overall role of the Managing Authority is to make sure that the EQUAL programme is managed and implemented efficiently and correctly. The specific activities that it must carry out are:

- ▶ to set up a system for the collection of reliable financial and statistical data on the implementation of the programme for monitoring and evaluation activities¹⁰;
- ▶ to make adjustments to the programme as set out in the Programme Complement;
- ▶ to prepare an implementation report each year¹¹;

- ▶ to organise the evaluation, in co-operation with the Commission;
- ▶ to ensure that all organisations involved in the implementation of EQUAL maintain a proper accounting system;
- ▶ to ensure the correctness of operations financed under assistance, particularly by implementing internal controls in keeping with the principles of sound financial management;
- ▶ to comply with community policy in the implementation of EQUAL; and
- ▶ to respect all requirements stipulated in the regulations, including those on the information and publicity¹².

The Managing Authority is also involved in all discussions between the Commission and national authorities on the management, monitoring and progress of the programme.

EQUAL specific requirements

Table 2.2 outlines the EQUAL specific responsibilities of the Managing Authority. Further information is provided in Briefs 3-7 of this Handbook.

Table 2.2 EQUAL specific responsibilities of the Managing Authority

General Responsibilities: Heads of Mission Meetings
The European Commission regularly invites the Head of each Managing Authority to meetings in Brussels. These meetings are used to inform and to consult Member States and to obtain feedback on Commission policies. For the Heads of Mission it is a good opportunity to keep informed of progress and emerging developments, and to exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from other countries.
Actions 1 & 2
EQUAL specific roles and responsibilities for the Managing Authority in Actions 1 & 2 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to provide information and guidance to potential applicants and, later, Development Partnerships (DPs); ▶ to prepare and distribute application forms for support under EQUAL; ▶ to organise the call for proposals for Action 1; ▶ to develop selection procedures and criteria for the selection of DPs (Actions 1 and 2); ▶ to notify successful and unsuccessful applicants of the outcome of selection; ▶ to organise an appeals procedure; and ▶ to assess Transnational Co-operation Agreements involving DPs from their country.
Action 3 & Mainstreaming
EQUAL specific roles and responsibilities for the Managing Authority in Action 3 includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to make sure policy makers involved in the preparation of the National Action Plan for Employment (NAP) and Objective 1, 2 and 3 programmes receive input from EQUAL; ▶ to prepare a mainstreaming plan; ▶ to organise, co-ordinate and manage national thematic networking groups; ▶ to establish appropriate links with European Thematic Groups (ETG's); and ▶ dissemination.

2.3.2 National Support Structure

The National Support Structure (NSS) provides technical assistance to the Managing Authority. There is a clear, financial distinction between the Managing Authority and National Support Structure. The Managing Authority is responsible for the management of the programme and its funds. Its costs are normally met by your country. The National Support Structure can assist with these tasks, and is normally financed by the technical assistance budget available through EQUAL funds. In practice, in smaller countries the Managing Authority and National Support Structure will work very closely together, but for reasons of control and accountability their tasks and personnel must be clearly distinct.

There are three ways to organise the National Support Structure, as follows:

A. National Support Structure integrated with the Managing Authority

The National Support Structure can be based in the same organisation and/or department as the Managing Authority, such as a Ministry for Labour.

Technical assistance can be performed by civil servants seconded full-time (this must be clearly documented) or by staff specifically recruited for this work (on temporary contracts). Boxes 2.4 and 2.5 provide two examples from current Member States where the National Support Structure is integrated with the Managing Authority.

Box 2.4 Integration in Finland

In Finland, staff for EQUAL were brought together from different departments. A clear distinction is made between the policy or strategic activities and implementation. This corresponds to the organisation of the Ministry of Labour: this ministry is not structured along the lines of themes, but along the lines of policy-making, implementation and support

(computers, finance etc.). Similarly, people from the policy-making department cover the strategic aspects of EQUAL, people from the implementation department cover the implementation and the technical support department provides computers, financial affairs etc.

Box 2.5 Integration in the Netherlands

The Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment went one step further and in 2001 created a specific Agency as the Management Authority for the ESF, including EQUAL. The Agency also acts as the National Support Structure. The Agency brought together the former employees of the ESF unit in the Public Employment Service and the Bureau for the Implementation of European Subsidy Instruments. This bureau of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment was also responsible for the implementation of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT.

B. Assigning the function of NSS to another public authority

Alternatively, you can assign some of the technical assistance functions to another public authority, as done by Ireland in Box 2.6.

Box 2.6 Assigning the function of the NSS to another public authority in Ireland

Ireland has a Technical Support Structure, but delegates much of the mainstreaming work to the Equality Authority. The Equality Authority is an independent body set up under the Employment Equality Act of 1998. It aims to eliminate discrimination in employment.

C. Outsourcing the function of the National Support Structure

The function of the National Support Structure can be outsourced to external consultants. This means that a service provider is selected through a public Call for Tenders.

Box 2.7 Outsourcing the function of the National Support Structure in Great Britain (GB)

The National Support Structure in Great Britain is devolved to the constituent countries: England, Scotland and Wales. The Department for Work and Pensions, the Managing Authority for EQUAL in Great Britain, awarded the contract for the National Support Structure through a competitive tendering process following an Open Call for Tenders. A private company was awarded the contract for GB-wide issues, and is responsible for running the National Support Structure (the GB EQUAL Support Unit) and Development Partnerships (DPs) across Great Britain. The GB EQUAL Support Unit provides help to the Managing Authority:

- ▶ to provide information to potential applicants and DP;
- ▶ to organise and deliver seminars and information events;
- ▶ to prepare and distribute application forms;
- ▶ to organise the Call for Proposals for Action 1;
- ▶ to assess applications;
- ▶ to notify all applicants of the outcome of selection;
- ▶ to assess Development Partnership Agreements;
- ▶ to co-ordinate and manage the national thematic groups (NTGs); and
- ▶ to prepare good practice guides.

Choosing a structure

A major advantage of 'in-house' technical assistance is the natural link between EQUAL and policy-making. Developing in-house experience of the management of EQUAL will be useful, not just for the management of Structural Fund programmes but also for general management development.

You should organise your technical assistance in a way that is most appropriate and effective for your country. Open and transparent procedures must be designed and adopted for the outsourcing of any aspects of technical assistance. In practice, this means using a competitive tendering process using a public Call for Tenders.

2.3.3 Staffing the Managing Authority and National Support Structure

The number of staff required for your Managing Authority and National Support Structure depends on:

- the size of your country;
- the size of EQUAL in your country; and
- the level of knowledge and expertise available to provide support.

Finland and Portugal are both small countries, yet Portugal receives almost 1.7 times more EQUAL funding than Finland. With nineteen members of staff, the Portuguese National Support Structure seems far better equipped than the five people employed in Finland. However, the latter can access support from specialised departments within the its Ministry, such as the IT department.

The type and quality of staff employed by the Managing Authority and National Support Structure is more important than the number of people. In general, the people working in Managing Authorities across the EU are highly educated and experienced. A list of desirable and essential qualifications and skills is presented in box 2.8, based on suggestions from the Finnish and Portuguese authorities.

Box 2.8 Qualifications and skills required for staff of Managing Authorities and National Support Structures

Required qualifications and skills:

- social, communication and diplomatic skills;
- willingness to learn;

- able to work in a team;
- writing skills: people should be able to produce papers in a short time;
- knowledge of the policy fields concerned;
- insight knowledge of the public administration;
- at least one person with financial management skills;
- at least one person with knowledge of information and dissemination (public relations, marketing);
- ICT skills and competence;
- knowledge of the EU Structural Funds, if possible
- audit and control skills.

Legal skills are considered less important; 'as long as you know where to find them'. Motivation and commitment can make all the difference for the implementation of EQUAL and its impact. This is not just a matter of recruitment, but also of internal management.

Attracting, and retaining, this kind of staff, is not always easy for governmental bodies. Remuneration levels and career opportunities are important considerations.

- ▶ to consider and approve the annual and final reports by the Managing Authority before they are sent to the Commission;
- ▶ to give its approval to proposed amendments to the CIP; and
- ▶ to take the initiative and make suggestions to the Managing Authority that will increase the quality of the implementation of EQUAL in their country.

2.4 Monitoring Committee

2.4.1 Aims and responsibilities of the Monitoring Committee

Structural Funds requirements

The Monitoring Committee is responsible for supervising the implementation of your country's CIP. Each country must set up a Monitoring Committee within three months of the Commission's approval of the CIP. However, you may want to establish a "shadow Monitoring Committee" well before this, as happened in many of the Member States when they were preparing for EQUAL.

It should be set up in agreement with the Managing Authority and after consultation with the partners¹³.

The tasks of the Monitoring Committee include¹⁴:

- ▶ to confirm or adjust the Programme Complement;
- ▶ to consider and approve the criteria for selecting projects to be financed;
- ▶ to periodically review the progress made in reaching the goals of the EQUAL programme in its country;
- ▶ to examine the achievements in terms of the targets set under the programme;
- ▶ to examine the evaluation carried out in your country;

EQUAL specific requirements

The Monitoring Committee is also a good way to involve a wide range of organisations in EQUAL. This is vital and reflects the general principles of partnership and empowerment. Partners' commitment to EQUAL is increased when they have a genuine opportunity to inform and shape the programme. They can act as sources and relays of information and encourage other organisations to apply for, and participate in, EQUAL.

In addition, the Programme will only be a success if its outcomes are integrated into mainstream policy and practice. The involvement of a wide range of organisations in the Monitoring Committee helps to achieve this goal. It is advisable, however, to encourage Monitoring Committee members to actively participate in the implementation and supervision of EQUAL to make sure that effective mainstreaming take place. This can involve visits to Development Partnerships and a role in Action 3 activities in addition to attendance at formal meetings.

2.4.2 Organising the Monitoring Committee

The chairperson of the Monitoring Committee should in principle be a representative of the Member State or the Managing Authority¹⁵. While no minimum number of meetings is fixed for the Monitoring Committee it is highly recommended to convene a meeting at least once a year. The Committee can also establish working groups that may meet more often, to discuss specific issues.

Box 2.9 Rules of procedure for Monitoring Committees

The Monitoring Committee draws up its own rules of procedure. Spain foresees a minimum of one meeting a year, Ireland and the Netherlands two. The Swedish MC has three meetings per year and an active executive committee that prepares each meeting before the main meeting together with the MA. And is actively involved in the implementation of specific mainstreaming activities. The Dutch Monitoring Committee established a steering group for mainstreaming. It operates on the one-person (organisation) one-vote principle.

2.4.3 Composition of the Monitoring Committee

In the spirit of EQUAL, the Monitoring Committee should reflect the partnership between the national public authority and other relevant actors. All stakeholders from the public and private sector should be represented, including:

- other national public authorities;
- employers' organisations and trade unions;
- local and regional authorities; and
- Non-Governmental Organisations, including those representing people who face discrimination and inequality in the labour market¹⁶.

The European Commission is a regular member of the Monitoring Committee. While it has no voting right it plays an important role as advisor.

Box 2.10 The composition of the Monitoring Committee in Spain

In Spain, three other national authorities are members of the Monitoring Committee: the state body for equal opportunities; the Directorate-

General responsible for immigration from the Ministry of Home Affairs; and the Directorate-General of the Institute of Migration and Social Services. All seventeen autonomous regions (*Comunidades*), the two autonomous cities, an employer organisation, a trade union and a representative of the State Council for NGOs are also represented.

Box 2.11 The composition of the Monitoring Committee in Great Britain

In GB, the Monitoring Committee draws together a wider range of partners with an interest in EQUAL. This includes representatives from: policy teams in several Government Departments; the three Equality Commissions responsible for sex, race and disability; the social partners; regional government; the British Refugee Council. It also includes representatives involved in the delivering labour market support to those at risk of exclusion – such as the Employment Service, and the Learning and Skills Council.

2.5 Paying Authority

Structural Fund requirements

Each country must appoint a Paying Authority. This body is responsible for preparing and submitting payment applications to, and receiving payments from, the Commission. The Paying Authority must certify all payments made under EQUAL. The Commission will not reimburse the expenditure incurred where this condition is not satisfied. The Paying Authority is also responsible for making sure that Development Partnerships receive payment promptly and in full¹⁷.

You are strongly advised to keep the functions of the Managing Authority and the Paying Authority separate. If both authorities are based in the same organisation, a different unit or department should carry out each function. This clear separation of the management and payment functions is considered to be 'good management practice'. Any overlap in responsibilities is certain to raise questions with the Commission's control service and risks the deferral, or even refusal, of payments.

The Paying Authority plays an important role in the financial management of EQUAL. This is discussed further in Brief 8 at the end of this Handbook.

EQUAL specific requirements

There are no specific requirements regarding the paying Authority under the EQUAL programme. In practice, the Paying Authorities for EQUAL and the other ESF programmes are likely to be the same.

2.6 Audit and Control

Structural Fund requirements

Each country is responsible for providing clear guidelines and procedures to make sure that sound financial management is followed. The organisation responsible for audit and control cannot be the same as the Managing Authority or the Paying Authority to avoid bias. This is a compulsory condition of the Structural Funds. The best way to avoid any overlap of roles is to appoint external auditors.

Box 2.11 Internal and external control in the Netherlands

The Dutch ESF Agency uses separate units for internal control, financial & general affairs, and legal and policy support. These report directly to the Director and are separate from the operational unit. Three levels of control are applied: internal control by the Agency itself, control by the accounts service of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and an audit by an external accountant.

The internal control by the Agency occurs at three stages: preventive, interim and final control.

EQUAL specific requirements

Beyond the standard ESF requirements, there are no specific requirements for audit and control under EQUAL. As suggested for the Paying Authority, it makes sense to use the same structures for EQUAL as those used for the ESF.

It is a good idea to get familiar as soon as possible with the regulations that govern the criteria for controls and audits. Some are found in 1784/99 (the ESF regulation), most of 1685/2000 (the eligibility rules and procedures) and 438/2001 (revised by 2355/2002) on financial procedures deals with this, and some in regulation 448/2001 on corrections.

2.7 Further Reading

- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).
- Communication from the Commission to the Member States establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market. ([2000/C 127/02](#)).
- Commission questionnaire on Chapter 21.
- EQUAL Model SPD for the candidate countries, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, Unit B4, Brussels. empl-equal-info@cec.eu.int.
- Presentation of Technical Assistance in the CIP proposals, revised version of November 29, 2002, Brussels.

3.1 General Overview

Managing Authorities, the Monitoring Committee and the National Support Structure need to lay the foundations for EQUAL. Thorough preparation is essential for your EQUAL programme and planning is key. You will be able to set-up a clear and well-structured initiative by making this early investment. It will also help to make sure that the most appropriate organisations participate to deliver a real impact on policy and practice.

This brief explains the key elements of preparation to help establish an effective programme in your country. It describes how EQUAL should be situated within national priorities, the type of information to be given to potential applicants and how this can be provided, the application process and selection for Action 1.

3.2 Thinking About the Focus of EQUAL

The EQUAL themes are broad and offer a wealth of opportunity. The exact focus of EQUAL in your country should be closely linked to national strategies and policy development. This will help EQUAL to inform policy making and to leave a lasting impression. The Managing Authority is strongly advised to think about how EQUAL can best be used in your country. Aspects to consider include:

- the different types and causes of labour market discrimination and inequality in your country;
- a range of appropriate activities to address the causes of discrimination and inequality;
- the types of organisations best placed to deliver these activities and address the identified discrimination and inequalities; and
- the level of detail and analysis expected in applications.

Taking the time to consider these issues will help you to decide on the focus of EQUAL. It will also

help to prepare the content and focus of information given in the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP), the Programme Complement and to applicants. Details of the type of activities that you expect to support, for example, will encourage applications to deliver these activities. The clearer and more specific you can be, the better the quality of applications you'll receive.

3.3 Providing Information to Potential Applicants

The EQUAL Guidelines advise that a wide range of organisations should participate in the Initiative, including public and private bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the community and voluntary sector, trade unions and employers¹⁸. Many of these organisations are likely to be interested in the opportunities available through EQUAL. Yet they know little about the Initiative, its purpose, structure or funding. It is essential that these potential applicants be informed. They need to know:

- ▶ what EQUAL is;
- ▶ the overall aim of EQUAL;
- ▶ the discrimination and inequality to be addressed in your country;
- ▶ the themes supported by your country;
- ▶ links to national strategies on employment and human resources, such as the National Action Plan;
- ▶ how EQUAL is delivered;
- ▶ what constitutes a Development Partnership;
- ▶ the purpose of Action 1 and the type of progress expected;
- ▶ examples of appropriate delivery activities;
- ▶ the leading principles of EQUAL;
- ▶ how to apply for funding; and
- ▶ the selection and eligibility criteria for EQUAL funding.

The Managing Authority and National Support Structure are responsible for providing clear information and guidance to potential applicants¹⁹.

The main sources of information are the CIP and Programme Complement prepared by the Managing Authority²⁰. Further information is always useful and can be provided in a variety of ways. It is important to make sure that the methods used are appropriate and effective for the full range of organisations that may be interested in EQUAL. You are strongly advised to explore the most effective ways to meet the information needs of organisations operating at different territorial levels and in different sectors. Boxes 3.1 and 3.2 explain two targeted approaches used by the Finnish Managing Authority.

Box 3.1 Providing information to local and regional organisations in Finland

The Ministry of Labour is the Managing Authority for EQUAL in Finland. Before the launch of the programme, the Ministry felt that it was sensible and appropriate to work closely with representatives based in regional offices to cover the entire country. Using their local and regional knowledge, these representatives were asked to identify local organisations that might be interested in EQUAL. They were then responsible for providing information to these potential applicants, and conducted regional events to make sure that local organisations were fully informed. This approach is a cost-effective way to identify potential applicants at the local and regional level and helps to deliver information to organisations across a country.

Box 3.2 Providing information to NGOs in Finland

The Finnish Managing Authority identified Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as a key sector of organisations that would be interested in EQUAL and well-placed to deliver activities to address labour market discrimination and inequality. They discovered that most NGOs were based in and around the capital, Helsinki.

The Managing Authority felt that a consultation / information event targeting NGOs would be an effective way to encourage their interest and attendance. Contact details for all NGOs were collected and invitations were sent out asking organisations to attend a special event for NGOs in Helsinki. The event was well attended and provided NGOs with the opportunity to find out more about the Initiative, feedback on its structure and focus, to consider the possibilities offered by EQUAL, and to explore collaboration opportunities.

Other common approaches used to provide information to potential applicants are:

► Media press notices / releases

Media press notices are used to announce a significant event, such as the official launch of EQUAL. These notices contain basic information on the Initiative for the general public. They must include an acknowledgement of the European Union's role, in co-operation with your country, with regards to EQUAL²¹.

► Website and mailing lists

All current Member States use a website to disseminate general information and developments about EQUAL.

Potential applicants, and successful Development Partnerships (DPs), are the primary target group of the site but it is also be used by government departments, research organisations and others with an interest in European funding.

Electronic versions of the application form and guidance are usually posted on the site when they are available. This tool provides access to up-to-date information, as long as the website is regularly maintained. Potential applicants can also be contacted directly through a mailing list.

Box 3.3 General contents of an EQUAL website

The following elements are often found on the websites of current Member States:

- An explanation of EQUAL and how it is funded.
- Information on the EQUAL themes adopted in your country.
- Information on the general principles of EQUAL: Thematic approach; partnership approach; innovation; empowerment; transnational co-operation; and mainstreaming.
- A timetable for the implementation of EQUAL.
- A newsletter.
- Details of forthcoming events.
- A discussion forum.
- Key documents, including the Community Initiative Programme and its summary, the Programme Complement, a downloadable version of the application form, guidance for applicants and other documents prepared for EQUAL throughout the programme.
- A reference table of costs to help calculate financial plans.
- Copies of presentations made at information events and seminars.
- Feedback information from workshops and events.
- Teaching materials.
- The answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ's).
- Information on the Development Partnerships (DPs) supported in your country (including a concise description, links to promoters, e-mail addresses).
- Access to the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).
- A database of organisations offering support services to DPs (e.g. training providers).
- Links to the EQUAL websites of other countries.
- Contact details for further support.

► Brochures

Many current Member States provide initial guidance to potential applicants in a brochure. This document contains summary information on EQUAL and sets out the proposed timetable for the call for proposals, deadline for the return of applications, notification of the selection process and implementation for Actions 1-3. Contact details for the Managing Authority and National Support Structure are provided with information on other sources of support, such as the website, seminars and information events.

► Seminars, workshops and information events

Potential applicants often have questions regarding the focus, scope and funding of Community Initiatives. Seminars and information events are a useful and effective way to provide information and answer applicants' questions. Common enquiries include: the membership or composition of a Development Partnership (DP); the nature of

supported activities; interpretation of discrimination; and the requirements of funding under the European Social Fund (ESF). These events can be organised by location and/or theme according to need, and are strongly recommended.

It is important that information and guidance provided at information events focuses on the aims, objectives and themes of EQUAL, their inherent concepts, and the application process. You should avoid commenting on specific activities proposed by applicants, except to confirm their eligibility (about eligibility see chapter 8). It can be helpful to clearly state the type of advice and information that can be given at the start of the event to limit the number of questions concerning the content of an application. This simple approach is open and transparent and makes sure that all applicants are treated the same.

► Personal advice

Personal advice can be provided on a face-to-face basis through visits, for example, by telephone or by email. It complements the larger, organised events by offering support at all points of the information campaign and application process. Advice and guidance should be limited to what is possible under EQUAL. You should avoid giving advice on the specific content of an application, except to confirm eligibility. This type of service is most frequently used in the period just before the deadline for applications.

It is vital that the information provided by the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure is clear and relevant to the application process and preparation for Action 1. The content should be tailored to the needs of different audiences amongst the potential applicants and provided in a variety of ways. Repeating the information is also advised to reinforce the key messages that you want to get across.

Box 3.4 Spreading the EQUAL spirit in Portugal

Representatives from the Portuguese National Support Structure (NSS) use meetings with applicants as an opportunity to reinforce the key messages on EQUAL in order to enhance the quality of proposals. “We are very clear with applicants. We say to them: EQUAL is a real opportunity to improve practice and the quality of resources. It’s not just a source of funding.” Once applications are accepted, representatives from the National Support Structure visit each DP and ask two questions to each partner: “What will you bring to the project?”, and “What will you gain from it?” The partners need to find answers to these questions for a true partnership.

The Managing Authority is responsible for publicising EQUAL and for providing information to potential applicants. At least one person from your Managing Authority must be nominated as responsible for information and publicity services²².

Details of the nominated individuals must be given to the Commission.

The European Commission requires all information and publicity material to be presented in a consistent format and displaying the flag of the European Union²³. Where possible, the flag should be accompanied by the following description in your national language: **‘Helping develop employment by promoting employability, the business spirit and equal opportunities and investing in human resources.’**²⁴

More information is available in the regulation EC 1159/2000 on publicity and information that sets out the criteria for what is required.

3.4 Application Form and Guidance

Applicants apply for funding from EQUAL by completing an application form. This form provides them with the opportunity to state their case for EQUAL support. It allows applicants to present: their overall strategy; links with the relevant theme; the nature of discrimination to be addressed and evidence of need; the role and added value of each partner; their planned innovation; and planned transnational co-operation. Your Managing Authority is responsible for preparing and distributing application forms to applicants seeking support under EQUAL. The National Support Structure can assist with this task.

The application form must be designed specifically for EQUAL. It can be based on existing forms used for ESF Objective 3 where these are available. The basic information requested in the application should cover the data headings used in a document called ‘Annex X: Data to be collected for the EQUAL Common Database’ (ECDB). A copy of Annex X can be obtained from the published documents section of the library on the Commission’s EQUAL website:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal.

The application must be tailored to the general and specific principles of EQUAL, and ask for details of the planned activities under Actions 1-3. Box 3.5 shows the main headings to be included in an application form.

Box 3.5 Main headings for the application form

- Thematic field / priority
- Territory / sector or operation
- Problem identification
- Development Partnership
- Action 1
- Actions 2 & 3
- Innovation
- Empowerment
- Transnational co-operation
- Dissemination
- Mainstreaming
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Equal Opportunities
- Expenditure and sources of funding for Action 1
- Estimated expenditure and sources of funding for Action 2

Detailed guidance for applicants must also be prepared to encourage comprehensive and timely completion. This guidance must provide information on how to apply for EQUAL funding, the deadline for the return of applications and a clear indication of where applications need to be submitted. It should also set out the selection criteria to be applied to submitted applications, describing the depth and nature of information required.

The deadline for the return of applications should be no later than a month before Action 1 activity is due to start. This time will be needed for the time-intensive process of assessment and selection.

Box 3.6 The benefits of investing in support to applicants: An example from Portugal

The Portuguese NSS prepared an extensive guide (280 pages) for applicants. This included detailed information on the 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) to be applied to the assessment and selection of applications. The ToR covered:

- objectives (general and specific)
- context and justification
- possible activities
- methodologies for implementation
- project beneficiaries
- partners to be involved
- expected impact and results
- evaluation and dissemination of results

Applicants were advised to follow the structure of the ToR in their applications to increase their chance of selection, although this was not compulsory. 82 per cent of the applications followed the suggested structure. The detailed guidance also led to clearly defined objectives, greater coherence between the objectives and planned activities, and appropriate representation in the proposed Development Partnership.

You are strongly advised to design the application form and guidance alongside the preparation of your country's CIP and Programme Complement. Enough time needs to be given for the form and guidance to be checked, amended and approved before the 'Call for Proposals'. The application will then be available for distribution to all potential applicants and other interested parties as soon as the call is made. The forms and guidance can be provided in a number of different formats, including:

- electronic versions of the forms and guidance material on disk;
- downloadable versions placed on the ESF or EQUAL website, taking care to use compatible versions of Word or Adobe Acrobat;

- paper copies available at a variety of venues such as local and regional authorities and from the National Support Structure.

Examples of full application forms used by Member States are available from the following websites:

Czech Republic: www.nvf.cz/equal

Hungary: www.equal.hu

UK – Great Britain:

www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/docarchive.html

3.5 Call for Proposals

The 'Call for Proposals' or 'Call for Applications' is the key announcement inviting organisations to

apply for EQUAL support. The Managing Authority is responsible for organising this call²⁵. Where possible, you are strongly advised to start preparing for the call before the Commission approves your CIP. The Call can then be made as soon as the Commission adopts this document. This approach makes sure that you get off to a 'quick start' and provides applicants with as much time as possible to prepare their application. In general, the quality of applications increases when applicants have more time to develop their strategy and contact appropriate partners. The exact timing of the Call, and the deadline for applications, depends on when your CIP and Programme Complement is accepted by the Commission. This period will also need to take account of the wider transnational timetable planned for EQUAL.

Announcements should be posted on your country's EQUAL website and placed in national newspapers to make sure that a wide range of organisations are alerted to the call. Key organisations, such as the social partners, should also be specifically targeted to encourage their involvement. National calls for proposals must set out the themes under which potential applicants can apply for EQUAL funding. They must also include an acknowledgement of the European Union's role in EQUAL and their co-operation with your country²⁶.

3.6 Selection Procedure

Selection for Action 1 is the main stage of selection for EQUAL. The Managing Authority is responsible for designing and co-ordinating the selection procedures to be used in your country. You are strongly advised to use the resources available from the National Support Structure to assist with these tasks. The Monitoring Committee is responsible for final approval of the procedures, particularly any criteria to be used to select DPs²⁷. The procedures must be fair, robust and transparent to meet the requirements of EQUAL. Details of the selection procedures to be used in your country must be included in your Programme Complement and any guidance issued to applicants. These details should include:

- arrangements for assessing applications;

- the nature and indicative membership of a selection committee, if used;
- selection criteria;
- arrangements for notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants;
- an appeals procedure.

The National Support Structure has a key role in supporting the effective implementation of EQUAL before the start of Action 1²⁸. Your Managing Authority can and should use this support wherever possible to design and implement the selection process. This will help to manage the work and to complete selection in the short time period available.

Box 3.7 Using independent, external experts for assessment in the Czech Republic

The National Support Structure in the Czech Republic hired two independent external evaluators to assess applications for EQUAL under the Phare programme. The evaluators were not only independent from the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure, but also from each other. Applications were allocated to each evaluator according to priority theme.

Box 3.8 Using independent, external experts for assessment and selection in Portugal

The Portuguese NSS hired independent, external staff to help with the selection process. These experts work at universities in fields related to the themes they covered.

All EQUAL applications must be checked to make sure that the application is compatible with EU regulations, in particular Public Procurement and State Aids rules.

3.6.1 A selection committee

Some Monitoring Committees in Member States establish a 'selection sub-committee' to assess the selection of DPs to be supported under Action 1. The role, responsibilities and an indicative membership of the selection committee must be included in your Programme Complement and guidance for applicants. Such responsibilities may include one or all of the following: designing,

approving and applying the criteria for selection. The National Support Structure should continue to provide assistance in the design of criteria and in completing the application assessments.

3.6.2 Selection criteria

Clear principles are integrated with all guidance and communications concerning EQUAL. The selection criteria used for assessing applications should reflect these general principles to maintain the focus and spirit of the Initiative. These criteria, and any weightings, must be clearly explained in the Programme Complement and included in all guidance issued to applicants. Table 3.1 overleaf provides an example of the criteria used in the UK, and the weightings used for each question.

3.6.3 Arrangements for notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants

Final selection of DPs is subject to approval by the Monitoring Committee in your country. On approval, successful DPs should be notified in writing, in the form of a grant letter. This letter must clearly set out the funds to be allocated to the DP for Action 1.

Box 3.9 Providing successful applicants with feedback in Portugal

Successful applicants in Portugal receive comments on their applications and suggestions for the further development of the DP and its activities. Tutors from the National Support Structure visit each successful DP to discuss these comments once the selection process is complete. The visits allow the tutors to clearly set out the 'rules of the game' at the beginning of Action1. DPs appreciate this clarity. The National Support Structure recognises that this is a considerable investment but feels that the impact on the quality of Action 1 activity, and EQUAL as a whole, makes it worthwhile. Staff must have good communication skills, tact and a thorough understanding of the regulations and the spirit of EQUAL for this approach to be successful. The visits need to be well prepared and should focus on the common goals of the National Support Structure and the DP – delivering high quality activities and outputs.

You are also required to provide unsuccessful applicants with a clear reason, in writing for not being selected²⁹. This notification should not be too detailed so as to avoid encouraging long, drawn-out discussions with unsuccessful applicants.

The standard letter used to notify Phare applicants is a useful example of the level of detail to provide to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Table 3.10 Selection criteria and weighting used in Great Britain

Selection Questions (and sub questions)	Max. score	Min. score
1. Explain the purpose of your Development Partnership, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Details of the objectives of your DP and how they fit with your chosen EQUAL theme. ► Details of potential impact of DP. [Key eligibility criteria – minimum score required.]	14 8 6	5 4
2. Explain what your Development Partnership is going to do, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Details of your DP work programme for Action 1. ► An overview of the nature of activities you intend to implement in Action 2. 	12 6 6	
3. Explain why the Development Partnership is needed, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► The rationale for setting up the DP. ► Who the DP aims to assist and the barriers they face. 	14 8 6	

Selection Questions (and sub questions)	Max. score	Min. score
4. How will your Development Partnership activities impact upon, support and promote Equal Opportunities?	20	
▶ An outline of the Equal Opportunities Action Plan that describes how Equal Opportunities will be incorporated into the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of your Development Partnership activity.	10	7
▶ Acknowledging that EQUAL DPs need to reflect diversity within their target groups, set out the anticipated impact of your activity on all socially excluded groups that are subject to the main forms of discrimination.	10	7
[Key eligibility criteria – minimum score required.]		
5. Describe how your Development Partnership will take forward an effective “partnership approach” in designing, developing and implementing your work programme.	8	
6. Describe how your Development Partnership will take account of the need for innovation under EQUAL in terms of its approach and its activity.	12	8
[Key eligibility criteria – minimum score required]		
7. Describe how your Development Partnership will empower disadvantaged groups and individuals.	8	
8. Describe how the transnational aspect of the EQUAL programme will add value to your proposed Development Partnership activity.	12	
TOTAL:	100	

3.6.4 An appeals procedure

Unsuccessful applicants must be able to appeal if they are not selected. An appeal can only be based on the information provided in the application to guarantee a fair and transparent process. No new information is allowed and should not be considered.

- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).
- Regulation on information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds ([No 1159/2000](#)).
- Community Initiative Programmes, available from the EQUAL website.
- EQUAL website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

3.7 Further Reading

- Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL. ([2000/C 127/02](#))

4.1 Background

Action 1 is a new concept in European Community Initiatives that builds on the lessons of previous programmes. The new structure of EQUAL intends to enable all DPs across the EU to develop their work programmes and national partnerships in line with a common time table.

This brief explains the purpose of Action 1, what it means in practice, the monitoring requirements, and how activity in Action 1 links with Action 2.

4.2 What is Action 1?

Action 1 is the first stage of activity for Development Partnerships (DPs). It is a developmental stage to help DPs:

- consolidate their partnership;
- refine their work programme; and
- develop the transnational aspect of their activities.

The work completed in Action 1 is expected to inform the preparation of two key documents by DPs:

- ▶ **A Development Partnership Agreement (DPA):** A formal contract between all partners in the DP.
- ▶ **A Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA):** A formal contract between a number of

DPs in two or more Member States (transnational partners).

Each DP must submit these documents to the Managing Authority at the end of Action 1. The Managing Authority is then responsible for assessing the content of each DPA and TCA to confirm a DP's selection into Action 2. This selection process is discussed further in section 4.5 – 'Links with Action 2'.

The Managing Authority is responsible for deciding the length and amount of funding for Action 1. It will in most cases last around six months, but in the 2nd round member states may choose to spend slightly more time to develop their partnerships. It must not represent a significant part of the total funds available for EQUAL in your country³⁰. Current Member States tend to provide the full six months and restrict the budget for Action 1 to five per cent of their total EQUAL funds.

4.3 Delivering Action 1

The launch of Action 1 is co-ordinated across the European Union so that DPs in all countries start on the same date. It is a busy period for DPs, MAs and NSSs. Table 4.1 outlines the key tasks to be completed by each DP for national and transnational co-operation.

Table 4.1 Key tasks for DPs in Action 1

DP Consolidation	Transnational Co-operation
▶ Develop and refine the planned activities based on research completed in Action 1.	▶ Establish broad objectives for the DP to achieve through transnational co-operation.
▶ Check that the partnership includes the full range of organisations needed to deliver all planned activities. Recruit new partners where necessary.	▶ Find transnational partners and agree the common objectives of the participating DPs.
▶ Set up appropriate management, payment and delivery structures.	▶ Agree decision making and delivery arrangements for transnational co-operation.
▶ Agree and define the roles and responsibilities	▶ Agree and define the roles and responsibilities

of each DP partner.	of each transnational partner.
▶ Set up mechanisms for the ongoing assessment of activities.	▶ Determine how joint activities will be monitored and evaluated.
▶ Secure a genuine commitment from each partner to co-operate in both national and transnational work.	▶ Nominate an ETCIM secretary ³¹ .
▶ Prepare a detailed work programme.	▶ Prepare a transnational work programme.
▶ Agree on intellectual property rights of possible DP products and include in DP agreement	▶ Agree on intellectual property rights of possible TCA products and include in TCA agreement
▶ Prepare a Development Partnership Agreement.	▶ Prepare a Transnational Co-operation Agreement.

DPs will need practical and technical help with these tasks. Managing Authorities and National Support Structures must be prepared to provide ongoing support to DPs throughout Action 1.

This is a good opportunity to develop closer links with each DP. Providing ongoing support will help you to follow the development of each DP, to advise on the partnership strategy and to make sure that it meets the EQUAL priorities chosen by your country. Remember that Action 1 must not represent a significant part of the total EQUAL funds available.

The National Support Structure is well-placed to deliver most of this assistance. The level and type of support offered, however, will depend on the size of EQUAL in your country. Here are some examples of the different types of support that can be offered:

- visits to Development Partnerships;
- seminars and workshops;
- information and networking events;
- advice by telephone and/or email; and
- training courses and workshops.

Support delivered on a 'face-to-face' basis is often the most effective. This approach is direct, 'hands on' and welcomed by DPs. It allows the National Support Structure to gain a greater insight into a DP's context, its strategy and ongoing development. The advice provided can then be more tailored to the needs of the DP.

Box 4.1 Tutor support for Development Partnerships in the Czech Republic

The National Support Structure in the Czech Republic use vocational tutors from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to provide support to each DP in Action 1. This service is free of charge to DPs. The tutors help DPs to prepare the content of their planned activities to make sure that they address the selected priority theme. The tutors also assure that the activities are in line with, and contribute to, national strategic documents.

Box 4.2 Action 1 events, seminars and workshops in Great Britain

The GB EQUAL Support Unit offers a rolling programme of events. Seminars at the start of Action 1 aim to help DPs move forward and to prepare for Action 2. The focus is on the practical aspects of Action 1 to help DPs to complete their DPA and TCA. The seminars include four workshops in the afternoon to provide DPs with further targeted support on a number of crucial areas of the DPA and TCA. These cover:

- ▶ Effective partnership working.
- ▶ Mainstreaming equal opportunities into the work of the DP.
- ▶ Empowerment of partners and those facing discrimination or inequality.
- ▶ Transnational working (benefits, good practice, potential outcomes) and the TCA.

Approximately half way through Action 1, eight events are organised around the eight EQUAL themes adopted in the UK. All DPs are invited to the event that corresponds with their priority theme. The purpose of these events is to encourage DPs to meet and network with one another, to discuss the development of their partnership and activities, and share experience with peer organisations.

DPs are expected to find transnational partners by using the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB)³². This is a user-friendly and regularly updated database. It contains details of all DPs selected for funding under EQUAL in all participating countries. The ECDB will be available from the Commission EQUAL website at the start of Action 1: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal. It is important that the Managing Authority and National Support Structure in your country provides all DPs with training on the ECDB in the early stages of Action 1 so that all are able to access the database and search for transnational partners.

Managing Authorities and National Support Structures must also provide clear information and

guidance on the content and delivery of the DPA expected at the end of Action 1. A 'model agreement' is a good way to show DPs the type and level of information expected in a DPA. As for the TCAs the information requirements are set out in the ECDB and are standardised.

Guidance should be provided to DPs at the start of Action 1 and repeated through ongoing support to reinforce the key messages. This will help DPs to deliver high-quality final agreements and will help you in the selection process for Action 2. Table 4.2 highlights the type of information that DPs will need. Further details of the expected content of a DPA and TCA are provided in Section 4.5 – 'Links with Action 2'.

Table 4.2 Information and guidance on the content and delivery of DPAs and TCAs

Development Partnership Agreement	Transnational Co-operation Agreement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The purpose of the DPA▶ The structure of the agreement▶ Where a blank DPA can be obtained▶ The type of information to be presented▶ The level of detail and analysis to be used▶ Examples of a completed DPA▶ The language to be used▶ The selection criteria for assessing DPAs▶ The deadline for submissions▶ Details of where and how DPAs must be submitted▶ When DPs can expect to receive confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The purpose of the TCA▶ The EU standard structure of the agreement▶ Where a blank TCA can be obtained▶ The type of information to be presented▶ The level of detail to be provided▶ Examples of a completed TCA▶ The language(s) to be used for the TCA▶ The selection process for assessing TCAs▶ The deadline for submissions▶ Details of where and how TCAs must be submitted▶ When DPs can expect to receive confirmation

It is essential that the guidance clearly state where completed DPAs and TCAs must be submitted, the deadline for submissions and the language(s) to be used in the documents. Note that each TCA must be prepared in English or French for the EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Internet Module (ETCIM)³³.

4.4 Monitoring

Member states are expected to collect regular monitoring information from each DP throughout Action 1 that eventually feed into the overall monitoring of the programme.

Table 4.3 shows the key monitoring data to be provided by each DP and entered onto the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB). Note that certain technical procedures established by the Commission need to be followed on how to send the information.

The transfer of the information can be done via ELIA – Local Input Application³⁴, or *via* the IT system from each Member State. It is important to be realistic and consider the cost-benefit analysis of developing bespoke IT systems if you only have a small number of DPs. Using the basic system devised by the European Commission may be the most cost-efficient way of handling this work.

Table 4.3 Monitoring data to be collected on the ECDB for Action 1

Main Headings	Data Fields in ECDB
Basic Information on the DP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Application and selection dates ▶ Title ▶ Partners to be involved ▶ DP managing organisation ▶ Other responsibilities ▶ Geographical / sectoral focus ▶ Status ▶ Linguistic skills ▶ Background in Community Initiatives
DP & EQUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Themes and sub-themes of the DP ▶ Rationale for the DP ▶ Objectives
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Nature of the experimental activities to be implemented
Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Total number of beneficiaries by: assistance to persons; and assistance to structures, systems and accompanying measures
EQUAL principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Innovation ▶ Empowerment ▶ Transnationality (searching partners and country preferences)
Financial provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Total ESF budget requested for Actions 1 + 2 ▶ Breakdown of expenditure by experimental activities ▶ Breakdown of expenditure for Action 1 ▶ Total expenditure paid out in Action 1, by EQUAL theme
Partner details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Name ▶ Contact details ▶ Type and size of organisation ▶ Legal status ▶ Date of joining DP; Date of leaving DP

Source: Annex X - Data to be collected for the ECDB.

The design of monitoring systems must also allow for a systematic and consistent flow of information to be passed from each DP to the national authorities and then onto the European Commission. It should be structured in such a way

to allow analysis by call for proposal, by theme and by Action. These systems can be based on existing arrangements in place for monitoring mainstream ESF.

Box 4.3 Using IT support in Portugal

The National Support Structure (NSS) and all DPs in Portugal use a sophisticated information system for ongoing monitoring. The design of the system follows the process of EQUAL for DPs: application, delivery and finalisation. DPs enter data directly onto the system, in parallel with each stage of delivery, and update the information each month. This is immediately available to the NSS and can be aggregated for the EQUAL programme as a whole. The system also performs a number of routine, automatic checks. All data is stored so that historical comparisons can be made. The systems contains the following menu options:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| • Administrative issues | • Application | • ESF modules |
| • Solvency and debt | • (DP) Execution | • Spending |
| • Registration | • Final bill | • Control |

An independent consultant, in close collaboration with a committee, designed the system. The software is entirely compatible with that used by the Commission's EQUAL unit. Managing Authorities are strongly advised to demand proven software from well-known companies to minimise risk. Commonly used software include: SQL, Oracle, Micro Strategy and IB2, and ensure that the people employed to do this work have the relevant technical competence.

4.5 Links with Action 2

Actions 1 and 2 are sequential³⁵. DPs can only progress from Action 1 to Action 2 when they receive a formal confirmation from the Managing Authority. Confirmation of selection for Action 2 can only be provided after a careful assessment of the Development Partnership Agreement (DPA) and the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) submitted by each DP.

The Managing Authority is responsible for developing clear and robust criteria for the assessment of DPAs and TCAs to confirm DPs' selection for Action 2. The selection criteria need to be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for formal approval and are to be included in the Programming Complement. You must make sure that all DPs are aware of these criteria at the start of Action 1 so that they know what they are expected to produce³⁶. The criteria should be tailored to the specific purpose of the DPA and the TCA respectively, and build on those used for assessing applications. This will make sure that each agreement is assessed against their intended purpose and focus, and against the progress expected in Action 1, as explained further below.

4.5.1 Assessing the Development Partnership Agreement (DPA)

The DPA is intended to present a common, agreed strategy for the organisation and work of a DP. The Managing Authority is responsible for the assessment of each DPA. National Support Structures conduct the assessments, sometimes with independent, external support. Table 4.4 suggests some criteria to be used for the assessment of a DPA but as a minimum it must contain:

- ▶ an assessment of current labour market exclusion, discrimination and inequality, within the thematic field and territory/sector concerned;
- ▶ objectives and priorities for action, reflecting the learning from previous relevant action in the territory/sector;
- ▶ a detailed work programme accompanied by a realistic budget;
- ▶ a clear identification of the role of each partner, including the arrangements for steering and managing the partnership and administering the financial support;

- ▶ a mechanism for ongoing assessment including the presentation of data and information on the DP and the analysis of results;
- ▶ the commitment of the DP to collaborate on Action 3; and
- ▶ its strategy and mechanisms for implementing a gender mainstreaming approach³⁷.
- ▶ An assurance that the intellectual property rights of DP guarantees free usage by the Commission.

Table 4.4 Examples of criteria for assessing DPAs

Key Headings	Criteria for Consideration
Rationale and Objectives	Does the DPA present a clear rationale for the DP, particularly for any new partners recruited during Action 1? Does the DPA clearly set out the significant added value of each partner? Does the DPA include a clear, logical and detailed assessment of the labour market exclusion, discrimination or inequality to be addressed? Does the DPA demonstrate a clear and appropriate link between the results of the labour market assessment and the planned activities? Does the DPA show how the DP will build on previous experience to deliver innovation?
Work Programme	Is the work programme clear, detailed and realistic? Do the partners have the capacity to deliver the joint work programme?
Financial Provisions	Is the budget realistic? Does the financial plan comply with ESF rules and requirements?
Organisational and Decision Making Arrangements	Are all partners of the agreement involved in decision-making? Will sufficient support and information be provided to smaller partners to participate fully? Is the management of the DP clear? Are there clear, appropriate links between decision-making and delivery arrangements? Are the operational roles and responsibilities for each partner clear and appropriate?
Monitoring & Evaluation	Does the DPA explain how activities will be monitored? Are the proposed methods for monitoring and evaluation appropriate? Are there clear responsibilities for monitoring and reporting?
Gender Mainstreaming	Is there a clear and detailed strategy for gender mainstreaming? Does the DPA clearly explain how this will be implemented? Are the allocated roles clear and appropriate?
General Considerations	Is the agreement of a high quality? Does the DPA demonstrate a genuine co-operative spirit?

4.5.2 Assessing the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA)

The TCA is a formal contract between a number of DPs in two or more Member States (transnational partners). As a minimum, each TCA must provide:

- ▶ Financial provisions;
- ▶ a transnational work programme accompanied by a budget;
- ▶ details of the role of each transnational partner;
- ▶ the common methods of decision making;
- ▶ the organisational arrangements for implementing the common work programme; and

- ▶ the methods to be used to monitor and assess joint activities.

The Managing Authority is responsible for assessing a TCA when it involves a DP from your country. You are expected to develop, agree and apply a common set of criteria with other countries participating in EQUAL for the appraisal of TCAs. These criteria should reflect the general principle of transnational co-operation within EQUAL:

“to promote the transfer of know-how and good practice between partnerships and between countries ... to deliver real value-

added for policy development at the national and European level.”³⁸

This means that the criteria should assess the extent to which the TCA demonstrates:

- ▶ a shared view on tackling specific problems of discrimination and inequality;
- ▶ the development of similar and/or complementary strategies, approaches and objectives by all of the DPs involved;

- ▶ an agreement on the priorities for joint action;
- ▶ a genuine commitment to validate, disseminate and mainstream their experience and results through national Thematic Networking Groups (NTGs) and at the European level³⁹.

Further criteria for consideration are suggested in table 4.5⁴⁰.

Table 4.5 Examples of criteria for assessing TCAs

Key Headings	Criteria for Consideration
Rationale and Objectives	Is a clear rationale for transnational co-operation between the DPs presented? Do the DPs demonstrate common interests / methodology / problem to be addressed? Does the TCA clearly set out the significant added value of transnational co-operation and how this will be achieved? Does the TCA clearly explain the policy innovation of the planned co-operation and how this will be achieved? Does the TCA add real, clear value to the DPA? Are the objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART)?
Work Programme	Is the work programme clear, detailed and realistic? Do the partners have the capacity to deliver the joint work programme? Are responsibilities allocated to the most relevant DPs? Is it coherent with the DPA?
Financial Provisions	Is the budget realistic? Does the financial plan comply with ESF rules and requirements?
Organisational and Decision Making Arrangements	Are all partners of the agreement involved in decision-making? Will sufficient support and information be provided for those with less knowledge and experience of decision-making? Is the management of transnational co-operation clear? Are there clear and appropriate links between the decision-making and organisational arrangements? Will the transnational partners work directly with each other?
Monitoring & Evaluation	Does the TCA explain how joint activities will be monitored? Are the proposed methods for monitoring and evaluation appropriate? Are there clear responsibilities for monitoring and reporting?
Dissemination & Mainstreaming	Does the TCA explain how joint activities will be validated and disseminated? Is there a joint mainstreaming strategy?
General Considerations	Is the agreement of a high quality? Does the TCA demonstrate a genuine co-operative spirit?

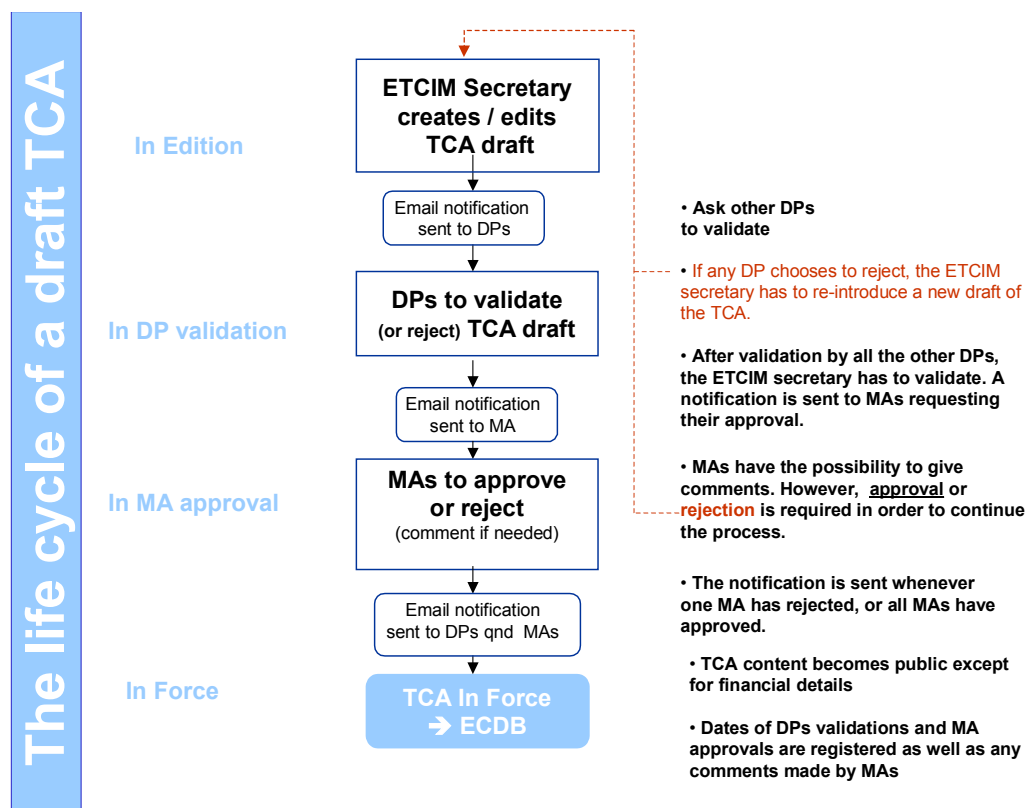
It is vital that Managing Authorities in different countries assess the same version of each TCA. The European Commission established an electronic tool to assist with this process, called the ‘EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Internet Module’ (ETCIM). This computer application is designed to allow a transparent and rapid procedure for consulting and approving TCAs. The

Commission gives one login code and two passwords to each Head of Mission for use by their Managing Authority. The Commission also provides a password for each DP in your country. The Managing Authority is then responsible for organising the distribution of logins and passwords to their DPs⁴¹.

Complete data on each TCA is added to ETCIM by a nominated 'ETCIM-secretary' in each transnational partnership. This must be entered in either English or French. All transnational partners must validate the entry to confirm that the ETCIM version corresponds exactly to the one agreed by the participating DPs. When this is complete, ETCIM automatically sends an email to all the

Managing Authorities concerned. This email explains that a TCA has been completed and asks the Managing Authority to review the agreement. The different Managing Authorities involved, with help from National Support Structures where appropriate, are then responsible for assessing the TCA using their own procedures and criteria. This process is outlined in figure 4.1 overleaf.

Figure 4.1. The approval process for the TCAs



Two outcomes on the assessment of TCAs are included on ETCIM:

- **Ongoing consultation on the basis of revisions**
In some cases, Managing Authorities may feel that a TCA requires some changes or further information before it can be approved. Comments should be provided to the transnational partnership via ETCIM for their consideration and a revised version of the TCA will be submitted for approval.
- **Approval and selection**
Each Managing Authority can indicate their approval of a TCA on ETCIM. Final

confirmation of a DP's selection and funding for Action 2 is, however, subject to the agreement of the other Managing Authorities concerned with the TCA.

ETCIM is only accessed via the Internet and is only available to authorised users. Managing Authorities are strongly advised, therefore, to meet with the Commission before the launch of EQUAL in your country to make sure all the necessary arrangements are in place. Addressing this issue early in the EQUAL timetable makes sure that there is sufficient time to tackle any problems before ETCIM is actually used.

The issues to be discussed in these meetings may include:

- ▶ setting up authorised users;
- ▶ where and how ETCIM should be accessed;
- ▶ the protocol used for providing comments on submitted TCAs; and
- ▶ negotiating approval of TCAs with other Managing Authorities.

The Commission will provide all the necessary support with the installation and use of the programme.

4.6 Confirmation for Action 2

The Managing Authority is responsible for confirming the selection of DPs for Action 2 at the end of Action 1⁴². This must be done when both the DPA and TCA are fully approved. Confirmation of selection must be provided in writing in the form of a grant letter, providing full details of the funds to be received for each year of Action 2 support.

You should also provide unsuccessful DPs with a clear reason, in writing, for not being selected⁴³. This notification should not be too detailed so as to avoid encouraging long-drawn-out discussions with DPs.

4.7 Further Reading

- Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL. (2000/C 127/02)
- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds (No 1260/1999).
- Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation for the Human Resources Initiative EQUAL in the period 2000-2006.
- Brief No.s 1, 5 & 11 of [EQUAL Guide on Transnationality](#), available from the EQUAL website. [N.B. these documents are being reviewed in preparation for the 2nd round]
- Community Initiative Programmes, available from the EQUAL website under 'General Information'.
- Annex X: Data to be collected for the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).
- Users guide for the EQUAL Common Database ([ECDB](#)).
- Managing Authority User Guide for the EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Internet Module (ETCIM).
- DP User Guide for ETCIM.
- EQUAL website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

Development Partnerships receive confirmation of their selection for Action 2 at the end of Action 1, after an assessment of their Development Partnership Agreement and Transnational Co-operation Agreement. These documents set out, in detail, DPs' plans for Action 2 – their national and transnational 'work programmes'. This brief describes the implementation of Action 2 in EQUAL and what it means in practice. It highlights the different roles and responsibilities of the Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee and the National Support Structure in relation to DP support, ongoing monitoring and programme reporting. Finally, the brief explains how Action 2 links with networking, dissemination and mainstreaming activity in Action 3.

5.1 What is Action 2?

Action 2 is the key stage of implementation and delivery for Development Partnerships (DPs). It starts immediately after the completion of Action 1 and lasts for a period of two to three years⁴⁴. DPs are expected to deliver their national and transnational work programmes in Action 2, which may include:

- conducting studies and analysis of labour market discrimination and inequality;
- raising awareness about the causes and effects of discrimination;
- preparing information and publicity;
- designing and developing materials, courses, training and other employment aids;
- offering work placements;
- delivering guidance, counselling and training;
- creating and sustaining jobs; and
- improving employment services.

If the results obtained by a DP justify an extension, the Monitoring Committee can approve a further grant and period of financing for the DP. Managing Authorities must develop clear criteria for assessing the justification of an extension to ensure a fair and transparent process.

The Managing Authority and National Support Structure is responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring activity in Action 2, and making links with Action 3. The Managing Authority is also responsible for deciding the amount of funding for Action 2. This is substantial with current Member States' allocations ranging from 75 per cent of the total funds available for EQUAL in Denmark to 83 per cent in Germany.

5.2 Delivering Action 2

The launch of Action 2 is co-ordinated across the European Union so that DPs in all countries, and therefore all transnational partnerships, start on the same date. The key roles for the Managing Authority and the National Support Structure are ongoing support, monitoring and co-ordination with Action 3. This includes: seminars and workshops; training; monitoring visits to Development Partnerships; identifying, and disseminating, good practice; and making the links between delivery and Action 3 activities.

5.3 Monitoring

The Managing Authority is responsible for collecting regular monitoring information from each DP throughout Action 2. The National Support Structure can assist with this process. Some current Member States tie their request for monitoring information with expenditure claims from DPs to encourage the supply of complete information. In these cases, grant payments are not made until full monitoring information is provided. This approach encourages the collection of timely information and confines the collation of monitoring and financial information for DPs: It is concentrated in a particular period of time, allowing DPs to focus on the delivery of their work programme. Table 5.1 shows the key monitoring data to be entered onto the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).

Table 5.1 Monitoring data to be collected on the ECDB for Action 2

Main Headings	Data Fields in ECDB
Updated data from Action 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Basic information on the DP (title, partners involved, DP managing organisation, other responsibilities, geographical / sectoral focus, status, linguistic skills and background in Community Initiatives) ▶ DP & EQUAL (themes and sub-themes of the DP, rationale and objectives) ▶ Delivery (Nature of the experimental activities to be implemented for national and transnational work)
DP Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Summary text on the DP agreement
Transnational co-operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Transnational partners (DPs) ▶ Transnational co-operation partnerships
Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Total number of beneficiaries by: assistance to persons; and assistance to structures, systems and accompanying measures
Expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown of expenditure by experimental activities for national and transnational work ▶ Breakdown of expenditure for Action 2 ▶ Total expenditure paid out during the year for Action 2, by EQUAL theme
Partner details (updating Action 1 data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Name ▶ Contact details ▶ Type and size of organisation ▶ Legal status ▶ Date of joining DP; Date of leaving DP

Source: Annex X - Data to be collected for the ECDB.

5.4 Links with Action 3

The success of EQUAL rests on Member States' ability to use the results and experiences of DPs to inform policy-making and practice. For this reason, emphasis is placed on early dissemination and mainstreaming - Action 3 activities – alongside the delivery of Action 2. Timing, however, is crucial. Managing Authorities are well placed to identify emerging policy issues and developments in their Member States, which can be informed by the work of DPs. They also offer wide links with the full range of social partners that may be affected by new policy and practice. It is the responsibility of the Managing Authority, therefore, to make an effective link between Actions 2 and 3 in their Member States. Further information on Action 3 is provided in Brief 6 of this Handbook.

- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).
- Regulation on information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds ([No 1159/2000](#)).
- Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation for the Human Resources Initiative EQUAL in the period 2000-2006.
- EQUAL Guide to Monitoring Committees for Desk Officer, available from the Commission.
- EQUAL Guide on Transnationality, Brief No. 11.
- Community Initiative Programmes, available from the EQUAL website under 'General information'.
- Annex X: Data to be collected for the EQUAL common database (ECDB).
- EQUAL website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

5.5 Further Reading

- Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL. ([2000/C 127/02](#)).

This briefing paper explains what Action 3 means and how it can be put into practice, outlining the strategies used to deliver Development Partnership (DP) activity, and national and European thematic work. The brief also provides examples of how Action 3 is managed in current Member States and at the European level to achieve real change in policy and practice.

Two types of network form the backbone of Action 3: National Thematic Groups (NTGs) and European Thematic Groups (ETG's). These aims to co-ordinate Action 3 activity at the national and European level respectively to make sure that DPs' results and experiences influence policy making at the highest level. Further information on the purpose and structure of these networks is provided in sections 6.3 and 6.4.

6.1 What is Action 3?

Action 3 is a significant part of the EQUAL Community Initiative. It aims to inform, influence and change labour market and employment policy and practice. This impact is achieved through networking, dissemination and mainstreaming. The Managing Authority in each Member State is responsible for co-ordinating Action 3 activities to make sure that they provide a substantial contribution to the development of local, regional, national and European policy. This requires the active involvement of a wide range of organisations in order to be effective, and should include: policy makers; public employment services; non-governmental organisations; the community and voluntary sector; and the social partners.

6.1.1 Networking

'Networking' is about bringing people together to meet and to exchange ideas, information and knowledge. It is an essential part of Action 3 and involves DPs and other organisations concerned with the development and delivery of employment and labour market policy but not involved in EQUAL (non-programme players). Networking is most effective when it brings people together for a shared purpose or interest. Examples include a networking event to discuss policy developments within a thematic field of EQUAL or to exchange effective strategies to combat discrimination faced by a specific target group.

6.1.2 Dissemination

'Dissemination' is the spreading of information to individuals and organisations. It aims to provide knowledge about the context, design, development, delivery and impact of activities so that others can learn about, and build on, the experience gained through EQUAL. There are many ways to disseminate information, including:

- press releases/notices;
- newsletters;
- executive summaries;
- research findings;
- evaluation reports;
- audio-visual materials;
- websites;
- events;
- conferences;
- seminars or workshops; and
- discussion or focus groups.

Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and DPs are the main groups responsible for dissemination under EQUAL. Their efforts are effective when dissemination is targeted at a specific audience for a clear reason and is provided in an accessible format.

Targeting helps to refine the content of the message to meet the needs of the audience. This helps dissemination to have an impact rather than be ignored. Policy makers, for example, are often interested in the key results of activity in their

specific area of work. With significant demands on their time and many reports to read, any dissemination targeting this group should be short and to the point.

6.1.3 Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is a complex process. It aims to use the experiences and results of DPs to inform, influence and change wider policy and practice. This involves a number of steps, as shown in figure 6.1 below:

Table 6.1 The Mainstreaming Process

	Task	Responsibility
Step 1:	Test new activity	DPs
Step 2:	Monitor and document progress	DPs with evaluation support
Step 3:	Identify the key lessons	DPs with evaluation and peer support (from NTGs and ETGs)
Step 4:	Clarify the innovative element	DPs with peer support
Step 5:	Clarify what produced the result	DPs with peer support
Step 6:	Identify the target audience	DPs with peer support
Step 6:	Dissemination	DPs with peer & NSS support
Step 7:	Validation	DPs, NSS, peers & target audience
Step 8:	Transfer of lessons & activity	DPs & target audience (policy + operations)
Step 9:	Change in policy / practice	Target audience (policy + operations)

Mainstreaming can occur in two different ways: horizontal and vertical mainstreaming.

Box 6.1 Horizontal Mainstreaming

Horizontal mainstreaming occurs between similar types of organisations - 'peers' - or organisations working on a shared problem. A training provider in a DP, for example, tests a new method for recruiting older people into learning opportunities. When it proves successful, the provider passes on their experience of recruitment to an employer in their partnership, or to an employer or another provider not involved in the DP. This approach to mainstreaming may lead to a change in the practices of the receiving organisations.

Box 6.2 Vertical Mainstreaming

Vertical mainstreaming happens when a DP transfers their results and experiences to policy or decision-makers. This can occur at the local, regional, national and European level. It can lead to changes in both policy and practice. DPs, for example, may demonstrate the inequalities experienced by ethnic minorities in accessing third-tier education and the benefits of targeted support for such groups. As a consequence, the government department dealing with education might decide to introduce an enhanced allowance for such students, or introduce a quota system requiring third-tier institutions to take a minimum number of students from a minority ethnic group⁴⁵.

A concerted strategy is needed to link DP activity with policy developments to achieve vertical mainstreaming. A formal mainstreaming mechanism – such as a National Thematic Groups (NTG) – is an effective way to bring DPs and policy makers together at the very start of EQUAL. Such a mechanism makes sure that there is a clear link between policy needs and the planned activities. It also helps to build relationships and assists policy makers to understand the context in which innovation is developed. Further information on NTGs is provided in section 6.3.

It is important to remember that EQUAL does not operate in a vacuum. The results and experiences of the DPs will be useful and relevant to many other organisations concerned with employment and labour market policy but not directly involved in the Initiative. Mainstreaming must, however, be tailored to the needs of these different interested parties to achieve real change.

6.2 Delivering Action 3 at DP Level

The EQUAL Guidelines state that all DPs are required to participate in Action 3⁴⁶. Development Partnership Agreements submitted during Action 1 are expected to satisfy two specific requirements relating to Action 3:

- all relevant organisations will be actively involved in the partnership⁴⁷; and
- there is a clear and genuine commitment to collaborate on Action 3.

The type of partners involved in a DP will affect the type, quality and effectiveness of its mainstreaming activities. It is important that DPs include partners that can contribute to both horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. This helps to gain access to a wide range of target audiences and to increase the potential level of mainstreaming to be achieved.

You are strongly advised to take a pragmatic approach to Action 3 and mainstreaming at DP level. If your country has a relatively small number of DPs, it will be appropriate for as many as possible to participate in these activities. Where your EQUAL programme involves a large number of DPs, it can be beneficial to select a number of DPs to take a particularly active role in Action 3. These DPs should be selected on the basis of their results and their experience of delivering similar activities

6.3 Delivering Action 3 at the National Level

In addition to the Action 3 activities of individual DPs, Member States are expected to develop a thematic approach to mainstreaming at the national level. Managing Authorities are responsible for organising, co-ordinating and managing this national thematic work in their country. As part of this strategic role, each Managing Authority must develop real and relevant links between practitioners and policy makers to encourage the transfer of results and experience. Where possible, Managing Authorities are advised to use the National Support Structure to help organise, manage and deliver national thematic work. The exact role given to the National Support Structure will depend on their size, experience and capacity.

Each Member State is required to develop a mainstreaming strategy at the start of EQUAL. This is drafted by the National Support Structure in Portugal before it is finalised by the Managing Authority. The most useful way to present this strategy is in the form of a National Mainstreaming Plan so that progress and achievement can be reviewed. The plan should be a 'working document' that is used and updated on a regular basis throughout the Initiative. Its contents at the start of Action 1, for example, are likely to be sketchy since DPs will be in the process of consolidating and refining their planned activities. It does, however, need to be reviewed and revised before the end of Action 1 to incorporate the more concrete work programmes prepared by DPs. This will help to ensure that mainstreaming is closely linked with activities in Action 2 from as early as stage as possible. The level and type of national thematic work outlined in National Mainstreaming Plans varies significantly between Member States. The most significant element is the National Thematic Groups, outlined below.

National Thematic Groups (NTGs)⁴⁸

Many current Member States established National Thematic Groups (NTGs) for mainstreaming activity at the national level. The Managing Authority, National Support Structure and the Monitoring Committee in each country are responsible for choosing the focus of their NTGs. These should reflect the policy priorities in your country, as set out in the National Action Plan. Most Member States organised their NTGs around the EQUAL themes while others used the general principles as the main focus of their NTGs. Portugal, for example, identified seven areas including empowerment and working in partnership.

The main objective of these networks is to allow DPs to work together to identify and assess good practice. More specifically, they are expected to:

- ▶ establish a forum to encourage learning from DPs;
- ▶ establish a clear link between policy development and EQUAL activities as soon as possible (i.e. during the implementation phase – Action 2);
- ▶ involve organisations that operate in employment and labour markets but are not participating in EQUAL;
- ▶ analyse problems of discrimination in the labour market;
- ▶ develop assessment and benchmarking tools for good practice;
- ▶ develop dissemination strategies across the themes selected; and
- ▶ establish a clear link between national and European mainstreaming activities.

NTGs do not need to be restricted to EQUAL DPs. In fact, most current Member States opened their networks to 'non-programme players' to assist in the process of mainstreaming. The NTGs therefore provide an important forum for enabling vertical mainstreaming. Representatives from the Commission, parliamentary committees, social partners, regional authorities and national experts can also be included where available.

Box 6.3 Establishing National Thematic Groups early to improve the policy focus in Great Britain

In Great Britain Thematic Networking Groups were established, well before the DPs were selected.

Networks of policy and decision-makers at regional and national level with an interest in the policy issues were drawn together across each of the eight Themes taken forward in GB. Where appropriate representatives from NGOs representing specific target groups and from the Equality Commissions were also included. Importantly, and strategically, the networks are chaired by senior representatives from the policy community. This has been crucial to help build and maintain links with the wider policy community. The networks played an important strategic role during the selection process, by mapping proposed activity against policy priorities, identifying potential for collaboration across DPs and reducing the risk of duplication.

After the DPs were selected, Thematic Networking Groups met with them during Action 1 to help with the strategic development of DPAs. During Action 2, they have met regularly to review progress and share operational good practice, identify DP potential for good practice and policy messages, identify specific policy audiences, and importantly to develop thematic mainstreaming strategies which will form the basis for the allocation of additional funding under Action 3. The NTGs have strengthened the thematic cohorts of DPs and have helped to raise awareness of the programme throughout the relevant policy communities.

NTGs will play an on-going role in monitoring the progress of Action 3 and to offer continuing support to the mainstreaming process.

Box 6.4 Using National Thematic Groups to achieve vertical mainstreaming in Finland

Finland encourages significant ESF projects from other programmes to attend NTG meetings. This approach allows the knowledge and experience gained from the full range of ESF funded activities to be combined and broadens their sphere of influence.

Managing Authorities are advised to give the National Support Structure a major role in the delivery of advice, consultancy and guidance throughout Action 3. Support can be delivered to all NTGs by providing general advice and guidance in information notices, newsletters or on the EQUAL website. Support can also be offered directly to specific thematic groups or clusters models by attending thematic events and discussion groups, or by telephone. Examples of the type of support offered include:

- organising dissemination events such as open days, where key policy makers can visit DPs to see their work in practice;
- providing seminars on mainstreaming;
- designing tools for mainstreaming, such as key criteria for successful transfer and model examples of good practice;
- integrating the results of NTGs into the National Action Plan; and
- setting up and managing thematic discussion groups on the EQUAL website.

6.4 Delivering Action 3 at the European Level

Mainstreaming must take place at all levels of policy-making. European Thematic Groups (ETGs) are set up to help share good practice across the EU. Their primary objectives are:

- ▶ to identify good practice across each of the EQUAL themes;
- ▶ to consider how it compares with non-EQUAL activity which is being funded;
- ▶ to identify how it fits with emerging EU policy; and

- ▶ to develop an effective dissemination strategy to ensure that the wider audience is aware of and can act on the lessons from EQUAL.

Current Member States take lead responsibility for each ETG, according to its relevance with national policy priorities, its expertise and the resources available. It is essential that representatives of the NTGs are also involved in the European work. You will be expected to identify an individual to take part in EU-level work. This person could be drawn from those managing EQUAL, the National Support Structure or a DP, or could be a policy representative. National delegates act as intermediaries between the national and European networks to ensure regular information flows between both levels. They should inform the European discussions with national experiences and expectations, and report back to their national networks on European priorities and innovative aspects developed in other countries.

ETGs also engage a wide range of individuals and organisations to ensure that EQUAL is able to inform and be informed by wider policy developments. This creates a robust basis upon which the programme's outcomes can be disseminated effectively.

6.5 Monitoring

As for Actions 1 and 2, the Managing Authority must collect regular monitoring information from each DP for Action 3 activities.

Table 6.2 shows the key monitoring data to be provided by each DP and entered onto the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).

Table 6.2 Monitoring data to be collected on the ECDB for Action 3

Main Headings	Data Fields in ECDB
Interest in networking	▶ Descriptive on rationale, objectives and policy areas of interest for networking
Events	▶ Description
Products	▶ Description

Source: Annex X - Data to be collected for the ECDB.

6.6 Further Reading

- Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL. ([2000/C 127/02](#))
- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).
- Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation for the Human Resources Initiative EQUAL in the period 2000-2006.
- NetWORKing for Inclusion: Barcelona mainstreaming paper, available from the EQUAL website.
- http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/data/document/barpreppart1_en.pdf
- Brief No. 1 of the [EQUAL Guide on Transnationality](#), available from the published documents section of the library on the Commission's EQUAL website.
- Community Initiative Programmes, available from the EQUAL website under 'General Information'.
- Annex X: Data to be collected for the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).

- Users guide for the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB).
 - Member States mainstreaming plans, available from the EQUAL CIRCA site.
- EQUAL website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

7

Evaluation

This section of the handbook describes the present procedures and requirements of evaluation at the time of writing the handbook (2002/2003). The future demands on new member states have not yet been decided. Until we have these decisions, this section of the handbook should be seen as an illustration of how evaluation could be an integrated part of the experimental work in order to secure innovation and other results in the process.

7.1 The Purpose of Evaluation

The aim of evaluation is to learn from experience. Policy makers and practitioners use the lessons learned to make changes to policies, programmes and their implementation. The European Union (EU) has a long tradition of evaluation. The programmes and initiatives of the Structural Funds in particular are designed and adapted in response to evaluation findings. The EQUAL Community

Initiative, particularly the current emphasis on partnerships and transnational co-operation, is based on the lessons learned from the evaluations of EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT.

EQUAL encourages every one involved in the programme to learn from their experience and improve their work. This applies to all levels of the programme and provides three levels for evaluation, as shown in table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Evaluation at various levels

Level	Object of the Evaluation	Responsible Organisation	Typically Carried Out By:
Project level	Development Partnership (DP)	DP	DP itself and external expert
National level	Community Initiative Programme (and its DPs)	Management Authority	External experts
European Union level	EQUAL Community Initiative (and its CIPs and their DPs)	European Commission	External experts

The results of evaluations (national and European) are publicly available, upon request. This increases transparency and enables a better dissemination of lessons learned from the evaluation.

This brief explains the approach adopted in current Member States and how it can be adapted for the needs of Candidate Countries.

7.2 Self-Evaluation of Development Partnerships

Each Development Partnership must present a mechanism for on-going assessment at the end of Action 1. This must include an explanation of how

the data and information on the partnership will be presented, and how the results will be analysed. Each partnership must also submit details of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities to be used for transnational activities.

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There are three levels to the self-evaluation of Development Partnerships (DPs):

- monitoring of activities and outputs;
- assessment of the impact of actions; and
- an assessment of the way activities were executed, or the functioning of the partnership itself.

Self-evaluations should lead to a better understanding of the problems EQUAL attempts to address: discrimination and inequality in the labour market. They should also increase knowledge on good practices and how they can be furthered. The results of a self-evaluation create a baseline or yardstick against which strategies, activities and results can be measured.

Execution

Monitoring should ideally be part of the regular monitoring system.

The assessments can be done in various ways:

- discussion in partnership meetings;
- a written evaluation by each partner, based on a common format, topic list or questionnaire;
- peer review by similar projects in a country; and
- a more formal evaluation by an independent expert.

The Managing Authority must provide DPs with guidance on the methodology for self-evaluations. This should be done in consultation with the national evaluator and the Evaluation Steering group.

If the Development Partnerships conduct the evaluations themselves they can seek the assistance of an independent evaluator. Since most partnerships are big, this is neither strange nor unachievable.

7.3 National Evaluations

The national evaluations should assess the impact of EQUAL in your country against the aims and targets defined in the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) and Programme Complement. Impact goes beyond output and results. It should also cover the indirect and longer-term effects of activities.

Evaluations can be carried out at various moments during the policy or programme cycle: before, during and afterwards. The General Regulation demands that each country conduct three evaluations of its CIP, as follows:

- ex-ante;
- mid-term
- final (update of mid-term)
- ex-post⁴⁹.

Table 7.2 Types of evaluation under EQUAL

Evaluation	General Aim	Responsible Body	Main Contents
Ex-ante	Basis for the preparation of the Community Initiative Programme and the Programme Complement.	Authorities responsible for the preparation of these documents.	SWOT analysis of the country. Consistency of the envisage strategy. Expected impact of the programme.
Mid-term	First assessment of results and of the extent to which the targets have been reached.	Managing Authority in co-operation with the Commission and the Member State.	Actions 1-3 of the first call for proposals (2000-2003! Not valid for CC). The use of financial resources. The operation of the monitoring and implementation systems.
Final (up date of mid - term 2005)	Overall assessment of the results and the extent to which overall objectives have been met	Managing Authority in co-operation with the Commission and the Member State.	Activities under action 1-4 over the entire implementation period. The use of financial resources. The operation of the monitoring and implementation systems
EU-wide	Assess the rationale, the potential and real impact of EQUAL as a testing ground. Assess the added value of	European Commission	The implementation of the key principles of EQUAL in all member states. The networking, dissemination and mainstreaming work at the

	EQUAL at national and EU level and identify good practices.		European level. Impact of EQUAL on the EES and relevant part of the Social Inclusion Process
	Examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme and its impact. Also known as the final evaluation.	European Commission, in collaboration with the member States and the Managing Authority.	Utilisation of resources. Efficiency. Impact.

7.3.1 Ex-ante

The ex-ante evaluation must be carried out during the preparation of the CIP and the results should be included in the CIP. It can be carried out by the Managing Authority or by an external evaluator. Involving an expert from the beginning has some definite advantages, including:

- specific knowledge, skills and tools required for evaluation;
- the use ex-ante evaluation can be used as a trial run for subsequent evaluations where the use of an external expert is mandatory;
- expertise in the fields covered by EQUAL to advise public officials on the organisation and implementation of other aspects of the programme.

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The ex-ante evaluation should contain the following as a minimum:

- ▶ An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in the country with regard to the position of disadvantaged groups on the labour market, taking into account priorities from the NAPs.
- ▶ An analysis to see whether the strategy is consistent with the results of the problem analysis.
- ▶ The expected impact of the thematic fields selected by the country
- ▶ Complementarity with ESF mainstream programmes (obj 1 and 3.)

Candidate countries are advised to draw, for the more general labour market analysis, on the analysis that has been done for the ESF Mainstream CSFs and SPDs. Nevertheless, some specific analysis could be undertaken to take account of the specificity of the EQUAL CI, such as:

- ▶ Analysis of labour market discriminations (socio-economic context)
- ▶ Innovation in the labour market
- ▶ Characteristics of local actors (public, private, NGOs, etc)
- ▶ Situation of asylum seekers and existing policies in this field (if the field is retained)

7.3.2 Mid-term and final

For current Member States the evaluation process of the EQUAL national programmes is divided in two stages covering the first call for proposals: a mid term evaluation (by 2003) and a final evaluation by 2005) covering the entire implementation of the first call of the programme and the mid-term reprogramming.

Candidate Countries do not have any obligation regarding mid-term evaluation, since it concerns the period before accession. The final evaluation foreseen in 2005 for current Member States does not seem a useful set up for Candidate Countries in the present format. **However, the evaluation mechanism for the second round of EQUAL has not been defined yet, and this should take account of Candidate Countries. Given the innovative nature of EQUAL, it would be appropriate that Candidate Countries set up an evaluation system that ensures continuous feedback since the adoption of the programmes and with a particular focus on the initial phase of implementation, so as to provide timely lessons for the future programming period. This evaluation should be trusted to independent experts.**

The 'Evaluation Steering Group' will be the main body guiding and monitoring the evaluation process at national level. The steering group will be set up by the Managing Authority and should ideally involve a representative group from the Monitoring Committee

with a view to ensure dissemination and mainstreaming of the findings from the evaluation exercise. The Commission is an equal partner in the steering group. The Monitoring Committee needs to be informed on the main stages of progress of the evaluation exercise.

A detailed overview of the tasks of the steering group can be found in the Commission document: Key issues for the mid-term evaluation of EQUAL CIP in the Member States, of 3 September 2001.

The Managing Authority is responsible for organising an external, independent evaluator for the evaluation. It needs to propose a selection procedure to the Steering Group that decides on the process and the selection of the evaluator. This process must be open and transparent, and in line with the EU public procurement regulations. The timing for the evaluation in candidate countries is unclear and the Commission will provide further information in due course.

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The evaluation should look both at the policy side, notably the impact of the programme on the labour market context, its policies and practices and the effectiveness of the implementation mechanism in your country. The results from the Development Partnerships evaluations are an important source of information for evaluation. You will find below a list of the main topics to be addressed:

- socio-economic context;
- conditions of implementation;
- changes in the management of the programme;
- nature of activities supported;
- specific objectives at the level of themes and/or Actions;
- outcomes;
- impact.

7.4 Evaluations undertaken by the Commission

7.4.1 EU wide mid-term and final evaluation

The Commission undertakes an EU wide evaluation of EQUAL with a view to assess specifically the main principles of EQUAL and their impact in the different member states. The aim is to assess the

rationale, potential and initial impact of EQUAL, to identify and assess the added value of EQUAL to existing labour market policies and practices at national and EU level, and to identify good and innovative practice in delivering employment policy. It will produce reports yearly from 2002 to 2005.

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The national evaluations described above will be a major input for the EU-wide mid-term evaluation. On the one hand this evaluation will contain a synthesis of the national mid-term and final evaluations, focusing on the nine thematic priorities and the key principles of EQUAL. On the other hand, the EU wide evaluation will devote specific attention to the transnational co-operation between Development Partnerships, the effectiveness of the EU-level networking, dissemination and mainstreaming at EU level, and policy impact of EQUAL on the European Employment Strategy and other Community programmes.

7.4.2 Ex-post evaluation

On the basis of the results already available, the Commission will be responsible for the organisation of an ex-post evaluation conducted by external evaluators and covering all Member States. This will be done in collaboration with the Member States and the managing authorities.

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The ex-post evaluation shall cover the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impacts. It shall draw conclusions regarding policy on economic and social cohesion. It shall cover the factors contributing to the success or failure of implementation and the achievements and results, including their sustainability.

7.4.3 Other evaluations

In addition, there may be evaluations upon the request from Member States or the European Commission. These will be European evaluations, often focusing on a particular aspect or theme. Member States will be requested to participate in these evaluations. This participation may, for example, consist of:

- filling out a questionnaire;
- participation in interviews or group discussions;
- sending relevant data and information.

7.5 Monitoring

Systematic monitoring is critical to understand how and where EQUAL funding is being used, the activities delivered and their impact reached. The

monitoring data is the basis for the evaluation as well as for the annual reporting on the programme from the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority in each country is responsible for setting up a comprehensive monitoring system to gather reliable financial and statistical information on the full implementation of EQUAL⁵⁰. Below you will find a list of the main elements on which monitoring data should be provided over period of implementation:

Table 7.3 Minimum monitoring data requirements

Minimum (input and output) Quantitative Data	Minimum Qualitative Information
Action 1: Setting up partnerships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Total and average amounts spent to set up DP/TC ▶ Average time spent to set up DP/TC ▶ Average number of partners in DP/TC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Geographical or sectoral DP, themes
Action 2: Implementing work programmes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Amounts spent with distribution by core activities and separation for transnational activities ▶ Number of beneficiaries in the core activities and distribution by gender and status in the labour market, asylum seekers, size and sector of companies ▶ Number of transnational meetings attended / time spent in events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Classification of the principal type of innovation pursued during the year ▶ Classification of the principal transnational co-operation activity carried out during the year
Action 3: National networking, dissemination & mainstreaming	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Amounts spent for specific preparation and participation ▶ Number of events attended / Time spent in events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Type of event (meeting / conference / other)
Action 3: DPs' participation in European level networking, dissemination & mainstreaming	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Amounts spent for preparation and participation ▶ Number of events attended / Time spent in events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Type of event (thematic review / discussion forum / other)

Source: Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation for the Human Resources Initiative EQUAL in the period 2000-2006.

The monitoring data is one of the main sources of information that feed into the Annual Implementation Report. The report is prepared by the Managing Authority and is one of the main tools to monitor the implementation of the programme. Each year the Commission provides the Heads of Mission with an outline of the proposed content and format for the Report. All countries participating in EQUAL agree to comply with the model provided by the Commission on the basis of a standard clause inserted in each CIP. The Annual Implementation Report must be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for approval and then presented to the Commission. Your Annual Implementation Report is likely to be a substantial document (25-50 pages).

You are strongly advised to allow enough time for the report to be properly considered before attending the Annual Review Meeting with the Commission.

7.6 Further Reading

- Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL. (2000/C 127/02). ([2000/C 127/02](#))
- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).

- Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation for the Human Resources Initiative EQUAL in the period 2000-2006 (European Commission, July 2000).
- Key issues for the mid-term evaluation of EQUAL CIP in the Member States (European Commission, 3 September 2001).
- Tender Specification for the EU-wide Evaluation on the Community Initiative EQUAL 2000-2006 (European Commission, 22 February 2002).
- Evaluation guides, available from the Commission's ESF website:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf2000/publications-en.htm.
- Evaluation of socio-economic programmes, available from the Commission's Inforegio website:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy.

8.1 Background

The legal framework for the financial implementation of EQUAL is the same as for other ESF interventions. It is mainly derived from the General Regulation and its implementing regulations (see 'Further Reading'). This chapter presents some of the main points of these general rules as well as some clarifications and definitions in the context of EQUAL.

8.2 Eligibility

As for other ESF interventions, eligibility for EQUAL activities depends on national rules unless specific rules are defined at European level. The types of activities eligible for ESF funding are given in the ESF Regulation (No. 1784/1999) and the Eligibility Regulation (No. 1685/2000).

The programming period covers the years 2000-2006, but this does not correspond to the period of eligibility. Expenditure can normally be eligible under a programme from the day the draft programme is submitted to the European Commission. For the countries acceding 1 May 2004, however, it has been negotiated that the eligibility period will start already on 1 January 2004. The last date of eligible expenditure will be stated in the Commission decision adopting the programme and it can be no later than 31 December 2008.

employability on the labour market, aid for employment, higher education in science and research, new sources of employment.

- Assistance for structures and systems: improving education and training systems, modernising employment services, developing links between the worlds of work and education, training, and research establishments, developing systems to anticipate qualification needs.
- Accompanying measures: raising awareness, provisions of care services, promoting socio-educational development to facilitate the pathway approach to labour market integration.

The aim of EQUAL is to impact on structures and systems. All the different types of activities are eligible to achieve this aim.

It is also possible to fund activities that are not normal ESF related activities, but rather activities eligible under the ERDF Regulation (No. 1783/1999), the EAGGF Regulation (No. 1257/1999) and the FIFG Regulation (No. 1263/1999). Thus activities eligible under the other Structural Funds are also eligible for EQUAL, to a limited extent, if necessary for the effective implementation of the programme. It should be noted that any such expenditure should take place only in exceptional cases and should not take away ESF focus from human resource policies.

8.2.1 Development Partnership activities

The Development Partnership (DP) activities eligible for ESF assistance fall into three categories:

- Assistance for persons: education and vocational training, apprenticeships, upgrading of basic skills, measures to promote

8.2.2 Technical Assistance

Technical assistance (TA) activities are also eligible for ESF support.⁵¹ The eligible activities under TA can be divided into three categories defined by the eligibility rules in the "Eligibility Regulation"⁵² and by the EQUAL Guidelines:

Type	Reference	What?
EQUAL specific support actions A	EQUAL Guidelines, Point 46	Support in thematic networking, dissemination of results, and mainstreaming, and providing advice and support to the Development Partnerships regarding the principles and methodology of EQUAL, in particular the thematic priorities, the partnership approach and transnational co-operation.
Basic administrative and financial TA activities B	Eligibility Rule N° 11.2	Management, implementation monitoring and control of the CIP, notably activities related to preparation, selection, appraisal and monitoring of operations, to meetings of monitoring committees, and to audits and on-the-spot checks of operations, which could include the salaries of civil servants seconded to carry out such "basic TA activities".
Complementary TA activities C	Eligibility Rule N° 11.3	Studies, seminars, information actions, evaluation, and the acquisition and installation of computerised systems for management, monitoring and evaluation. For these activities, salaries of civil servants are not eligible.

TA should be used particularly for category A⁵³. Category A mainly provides support to the DPs and thematic work, whereas category C mainly covers activities at the level of the programme.

It is important to earmark adequately technical assistance activities, in order to ensure an efficient administrative implementation of the programmes.

8.3 Financial Flows

Each Member State is allocated an ESF amount for their EQUAL programme. This amount is already divided into annual amounts when the allocation is made. These amounts do not necessarily need to correspond to the expected execution of the programme. The logic behind the distribution over years is linked to the overall financial perspective of the EU for 2000-2006.

At the adoption of the programme, the commitment of the first annual amount is made by the Commission. After that, the annual commitment is made automatically each year by 30 April. Any part of an annual commitment not spent at the end of the second year following the date of the commitment will be de-committed and the total ESF allocation to the programme will be reduced by the

corresponding amount. This is called the "N+2 rule".

The present programming period has a totally new system for payment reimbursements, based on the principle of reimbursement of actual certified expenditure supported by receipted invoices. In order to facilitate the implementation of the programme, a payment on account (advance) amounting to seven per cent of the total financial envelope is paid at the moment the programme is adopted. Thereafter Commission services only reimburse payments effected by the final beneficiary related to expenditure actually paid out. If the Commission has not received a first request for interim payment within 18 months of the date of the Commission decision adopting the programme, the payment on account must be repaid. This is called the "N+18 rule".

A system of reimbursement of real costs requires management authorities and final beneficiaries of ESF support to have a solid administrative and financial capacity so as to be able to:

- Pre-finance ESF-supported activities, since Commission only reimburses payments already made by the final beneficiary, although the payment on account can be used if the Member States so wish as an advance payment to pre-

finance operations before they are actually completed.

- Fulfil the detailed reporting, management and audit obligation laid down in Commission Regulation No. 438/2001 on management and financial control systems, which demand each actor involved at any level in the implementation of ESF funds to be responsible for the management and control of the funds entrusted.

8.4 Real Costs

Expenditure actually incurred must relate to payments effected by the final beneficiaries, supported by receipted invoices or accounting documents of equivalent probative value in respect of the services rendered, in accordance with the priorities and criteria defined in the CIP and programming complements.

The normal way for EQUAL and other ESF interventions to award funds is by a Call for Proposals. When assistance is granted without tendering (for example, by means of a grant awarded through a Call for Proposal), the application for payment is justified on the basis of expenditure actually incurred by the public or private bodies implementing the operation. In EQUAL this corresponds to the partners taking part in a Development Partnership.

Payment applications must be based on all the expenditure actually incurred by the DP and its participating partners. The Commission can check whether the service has been rendered and to verify the correspondence of the amounts certified to the Commission with the individual expenditure records and supporting documents held at the various administrative levels.

Co-financing might be provided either by one single co-financing entity or brought together from a variety of different sources: public (national, regional and local), private, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Where co-financing is brought together from a range of sources, it will not be operationally possible for all payments to be made specifically by the final beneficiary (DP) itself nor for all financial transactions relating to the

expenditure on the operation to be registered into the accounts of the final beneficiary. In general, the final beneficiary usually pays out Community contribution and part of the national public funding, but not private funds or national co-financing such as unemployment allowances. Nevertheless it retains the overall financial responsibility for the operation and needs to ensure the reality and eligibility of the expenditure paid and declared by other co-financing bodies. Under this scenario, the contribution from the funds would traditionally be calculated in relation to total eligible cost, in order to include all different sources of co-financing. The maximum rate of ESF support to any measure within a programme is 75 per cent if it involves activities in an Objective 1 area and 50 per cent outside an Objective 1 area.

The ESF implementing and management model with calls for proposals and co-financing from a variety of sources is mostly used in EQUAL programmes. It requires a strong sense of partnership and trust between the different co-financing entities and a solid management capacity at the final beneficiary level, which would be held responsible for the management of the operation. In the context of EQUAL it is important to remember that the final beneficiary is the Development Partnership. Therefore it is essential that the co-ordinating partner have a sound knowledge of financial management and preferably previous experience of managing public funds.

It might be a good idea to try to reduce the number of co-financing sources. While on the one hand the existence of a multiplicity of co-financing sources would help to meet minimum national contribution required by the regulations, on the other hand it would add complexity in the management and control of the interventions. In the present Member States there are different ways of organising the co-financing. Some have opted for the more complex system of leaving it up to the DPs to find the co-financing whereas others find the co-financing on the national level and grant a support to the DPs comprising both ESF funding and national funding.

8.5 Using the Euro

The rules regarding the currency issue in the Structural Funds are set out in the Euro Regulation

(EC) 643/2000. All official documents such as the Community Initiative Programmes, the Programming Complements, annual and final implementation reports must be submitted to the Commission in Euro.

The statement of expenditure used when applying for payments shall also be submitted in Euro. To convert expenditure incurred in national currency to Euro Member States shall apply the rates in force on the last but one working day at the Commission in the month preceding the month during which the expenditure was recorded in the accounts of the paying authority of the programme.

8.6 Financial Issues in the Transnational Work

Transnational co-operation makes EQUAL more complex than other ESF interventions. This is also true for financial issues. Detailed information on the financial aspects of transnationality is provided in the EQUAL Guide on Transnationality, available from the Commission's EQUAL website. This reference document should be used when planning a transnational partnership. Some of the key points to consider are:

► Eligible transnational costs

Costs that can be included in the budget of a transnational partnership include:

- Costs of participation (travel, accommodation and meals) in working meetings, events, and information visits.
- Costs of communication and translation to facilitate exchange of information and experiences.
- Costs of information visits and placements of participants (trainers, trainees, staff, key actors and others).
- Individual cost contributions from each DP to joint activities / joint development of services or products.
- The costs of organising meetings, events, information visits and placements, including costs of meeting facilities, interpretation, receptions, translation into the agreed working language(s).

- The costs of joint activities / joint development of services or products carried out by third parties.
- The costs of a Co-ordination Secretariat, process consultants and facilitators, experts, joint surveys; evaluation of the common work, etc.

► Transnational financial planning & management

During Action 1 development partnerships are to negotiate one or several transnational agreements with their international partners and to include a transnational budget. One transnational partner acts as a co-ordinator or secretariat of the transnational agreement and introduces the data into a database provided by the Commission. Managing Authority of the relevant Member State approves the agreement electronically.

Even though DPs are likely to have different levels of finance, and some may have far smaller transnational budgets than others, this does not necessarily mean that each transnational partnership can only work to the extent permitted by the participating DP with least money, but it does mean that plans must be carefully designed to exploit what all DPs can contribute, and to ensure that all are properly involved in the core transnational partnership decisions and activities.

In order to maintain transparency regarding financial management, and to ensure that they respect both European and you're their own national financial regulations and conventions, DPs will need to exercise some care and adopt good practice.

► Common rules and procedures for the transnational activities

All transnational activity costs should, where possible, be borne on an approximately equal basis by the participating DPs - the **principle of reciprocity**. If harmonisation, notably of financial capabilities, can not be achieved, the allocation of the transnational activity costs between the different DPs can be differentiated.

In this case, the DPs with more financial means (1) may pay the activities with a higher financial component, or (2) may pay for more activities than the other DPs or even (3) may pay a bigger share of the costs of a given activity (cost sharing arrangements). In any case, the agreed formula and decisions taken for distribution of costs between the different DPs must be clearly stated in the Transnational Co-operation Agreement. Each transnational budget will be **presented in two parts**:

- **Individual transnational costs** result from the division of tasks (and their related costs) between the DPs in a transnational partnership. These costs can be related directly to activities (modules of the common work plan) performed by one of the DPs (categories a – d) and will be thus be borne by each DP concerned.
- **Common transnational costs** are those incurred for joint activities/common services/joint products that are carried out on behalf of the transnational partnership and from which each DP in a transnational partnership expects equal benefits (categories e to g).

To handle **common transnational costs** transnational partnerships have a choice between two formulas:

1. **Reciprocal arrangements** (which should be the rule) and
 2. **Cost sharing arrangements** (either by pro-rata invoicing or by reimbursement).
- 1) Whenever possible, the general procedures for handling the common transnational costs will be **reciprocal arrangements**. In this case, one part of common work is handled (rendered by a contractor, or carried out by one the DPs) and paid out by only one of the DPs, and other parts by the other DPs. The principle of reciprocity has to be applied to organisational costs of meetings and events (category 1e). These costs therefore have to be covered by the host DP.

- 2) Where the principle of reciprocity cannot be feasibly applied, **cost-sharing arrangements** have to be specified for handling the common transnational costs. Such agreements will, in essence, include the transnational transfer of funds between DPs, or to common contractees, define the type of activity for which cost-sharing arrangements will be applied, the formula for allocating the costs between the participating DPs, and the methods for issuing the contract and handling invoices.

Cost-sharing arrangements must comply with current Community law to ensure effective functioning of the Internal Market, and to avoid creating new barriers to the cross-border provision of services.

8.7 Further Reading

- Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ([No 1260/1999](#)).
- Regulation on the European Social Fund (ESF) ([No 1784/1999](#)).
- Regulation on the eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the Structural Funds ([No 1685/2000](#)).
- Regulation on the management and control systems for assistance granted under the Structural Funds ([No 438/2001](#)).
- Regulation on arrangements for using the Euro for the purposes of the budgetary management of the Structural Funds ([No 643/2000](#)).
- Brief No. 8 of the [EQUAL Guide on Transnationality](#), available under published documents on the library section of the Commission's EQUAL website.
- Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL. ([2000/C 127/02](#)).

Endnotes

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- ¹ The European Commission is referred to as the Commission throughout this Handbook.
- ² Communication from the Commission to the Member States establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market (2000/C0127/02).
- ³ The nine themes may be revised in 2003 as a result of discussions between the current Member States and the Commission on the EES. These discussions will conclude in Summer 2003 and the exact themes will be known earlier in the same year. The general principles will remain the same.
- ⁴ This distinction is taken from: *Key indicators for Candidate Countries to Effectively Manage the Structural Funds*. Principal Report, NEI, Rotterdam, February 2002, Sjaak Boeckhout, Luc Boot, Menno Hollanders, Klaas-Jan Reincke, Jan Maarten de Vet.
- ⁵ Articles 9, 19 and 21 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999, laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.
- ⁶ Article 19 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999, laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds and Point 61 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL.
- ⁷ The Council Regulation laying down the general provisions on the Structural Funds (EC) No. 1260/1999.
- ⁸ Points 7 and 18 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL.
- ⁹ Articles 9 and 34 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 01260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.
- ¹⁰ See Brief 7 of this Handbook for further information.
- ¹¹ See section 5.3 of Brief 5 of this Handbook for further information.
- ¹² Article 34 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1206/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.
- ¹³ Article 35 of the Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds (EC) No. 1260/1999.
- ¹⁴ Article 35 of the Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds (EC) No. 1260/1999.
- ¹⁵ As above.
- ¹⁶ Point 62 of the Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL.
- ¹⁷ Article 32 of the Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds (EC) No. 1260/1999.
- ¹⁸ Point 23 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL.
- ¹⁹ Article 46 of the Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds (EC) No. 1260/1999.
- ²⁰ Copies of the Model CIP can be obtained from the Commission.
- ²¹ Annex to the Information and Publicity Regulation (EC) 1159/2000.
- ²² Annex to the Information and Publicity Regulation (EC) 1159/2000.
- ²³ The flag of the European Union can be downloaded from current Member States' EQUAL websites. The link to the logo on the Ireland website is: <http://www.equal-ci.ie/res/logos.html>.
- ²⁴ Annex to the Information and Publicity Regulation (EC) 1159/2000.
- ²⁵ Article 46 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.
- ²⁶ Annex to the Information and Publicity Regulation (EC) 1159/2000.

27 Article 35 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the
Structural Funds.

28 Point 31 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

29 Point 34 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

30 Point 32 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

31 See section 4.5.2 for further information on ETCIM and the role of the ETCIM secretary.

32 Further information on finding transnational partners can be found in Brief 5 of the EQUAL Guide on
Transnationality, available from the EQUAL website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

33 See section 4.5.2 for further information on ETCIM.

34 For further information, please consult the ELIA User Guide.

35 Point 31 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

36 Article 46 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the
Structural Funds.

37 Point 35 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

38 Pages 2-3, Brief 1 of the EQUAL Guide on Transnationality.

39 See Brief 6 of this Handbook for further information on dissemination, mainstreaming and Thematic
Networking Groups.

40 Please note that this list is an example and is not intended to be exhaustive.

41 Further information on ETCIM can be found in the Managing Authority Guide to ETCIM , available from
the Commission, and in Brief 11 of the EQUAL Guide on Transnationality, available from the EQUAL
website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/.

42 Point 39 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

43 Point 34 of the Commission Communication.

44 Point 40 of the Communication from the Commission, establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

45 Barcelona mainstreaming paper: NetWORKing for Inclusion, Preparatory documents for the EQUAL
Conference, May 2002.

46 Point 43 of the Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.

47 These include: public authorities; the public employment service, non-governmental organisations
(NGOs); the business sector; and the social partners.

48 Also called National Thematic Networks, Mainstreaming Fora, Thematic Clusters and Mainstreaming
Committees.

49 Articles 41-43 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the
Structural Funds.

50 Article 36 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the
Structural Funds.

51 Technical assistance is mainly carried out by the National Support Structures described in section 2.3.2

52 Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1685/2000 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of
Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 as regards eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by
the Structural Funds.

53 Point 46 of the Communication from the Commission establishing the guidelines for the Community
Initiative EQUAL.