

Transnational Co-operation in Practice

What is Equal?

The Equal Programme is a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative which operates across all of the European Union. The Programme aims to develop and test new ways of challenging discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work.

Equal has acted as a learning platform, developing innovative ways of tackling existing labour market problems. It has presented evidence based outcomes which could be adopted by policy makers and delivery agents at local, regional, national and European levels.

The partnership approach in Equal is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs), consisting of organisations with common interests and different expertise, working collaboratively to deliver shared aims and objectives.

www.equal.ecotec.co.uk

www.equal-works.com

www.esf.gov.uk



In Equal transnational co-operation has been a dynamic process that can offer strategic and long term benefits. The primary benefit to project promoters involved in transnational co-operation was the opportunity to access new ideas and share good practice. What is clear is that DP experience has varied immensely.

Successful transnational working has occurred where there has been a clear understanding between all of the partners about common objectives, national policy contexts and each other's working cultures.

Transnationality in the new England ESF Operational Programme will be linked to innovation and mainstreaming and will operate primarily at the policy and institutional level.

Key Messages

Good transnational partnerships result from sound preparation. Successful transnational co-operation works best when it is thematically linked and aligned with common policies and priorities. Transnational work requires dedicated time and management to set up and manage successfully. Small partnerships work best with all partners having a clear understanding of each other's expertise and national policy environment.

Transnationality impacts on the quality of the DPs domestic activity. Having a structured exchange of experience as well as study visits and staff / beneficiary exchanges generated a great deal of learning and created opportunities for measuring success.

Linking transnationality to debates and policy developments is important. Transnational cooperation must be a means to an end. It has to

facilitate the development of good practice and robust outputs that will contribute to European policy agendas.

Transnational cooperation should always produce distinct outcomes that can be mainstreamed. Experience from over 140 transnational partnerships has shown those who produce products that have been piloted in a range of settings and circumstances have a greater chance of successfully transferring their lessons from transnational working.

Previous experience of working with partners usually provides the best chance of achieving meaningful results but introducing new organisations to an existing partnership also stimulates new ideas and opportunities

Case Studies

Birmingham City Council has been responsible for leading transnational arrangements across four Equal DPs. It has worked with each of the four DPs' steering groups and transnational partners to develop individual transnational agreements and work programmes. Partners were identified through an assessment process that included comparison of economic and social issues, the partners involved, size and scale of activity proposed and building on previous relationships.

Each of the transnational cooperation agreements had specific outputs and outcomes specified that each of the partners would work collectively together on. This has resulted in the production of joint studies between transnational partners, digital CVs, empowerment tool-kits, inter-active websites and tools to support employers in recruitment, workforce development and work-life balance.

The '**Tackling Multiple Disadvantage in London by Improving Employability**' DP worked with partners in Hungary, Spain and France to develop their transnational workplan. Each of the four DPs led an activity based on their area of expertise, which was then built into a transnational partnership agreement. This was backed up by rigorous monitoring and ongoing communication to ensure that the objectives were delivered. Activities included the development of a website and common branding, a programme of staff and beneficiary exchanges and the development of transferable good practice guides, research reports and policy guides.

Factors identified by the partners as being key to successful transnational working included:

- Keeping the partnership small and manageable
- Developing the partnership identity and branding at an early stage
- Allocating tasks to partners based on their strengths
- Linking activities and objectives to specific EU policies
- Regular communication to ensure effective monitoring
- Investing in translation support to avoid misunderstandings

For further information see www.4inclusion.org