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INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC REPORTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is intended to provide background information for the thematic workshops at the EQUAL conference in Barcelona (16-17 May, 2002), to underpin and stimulate discussion on priorities for the European Thematic Groups (ETG) that will be launched to further develop work on the different themes.

The document is divided into 9 reports, covering each one of the EQUAL themes, which present an initial analysis of priorities and planned activities of the EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) approved under Action 1, and offer a first approach to identifying possible thematic options for the work of the European networks.

The following 9 reports have been prepared by different experts under contract with the Commission (IFAPLAN-Europas has covered employability and equal opportunities, AEIDL (Association Européenne pour l'Information sur le Développement Local) has dealt with entrepreneurship, and GHK Consulting Ltd has considered adaptability and asylum seekers). The Commission has ensured the co-ordination between these consultants with a view to harmonise the content of the reports; the reader might however still find some difference in the treatment of the thematic analyses.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The thematic analyses are mainly based on information available from the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB). It should be noted that the data contained in the ECDB reflects the intentions of the DPs at the stage when they submitted their applications (Action 1), which have developed since then. Action 1 of EQUAL precisely provides the DPs with time to develop the concrete details of their projects and to accommodate the interests of their transnational partners. Both the quality and quantity of the data vary considerably between individual Member States and DPs, and improvements are required to enable more thorough analyses in the future. The discussions at the workshops in Barcelona should also help to provide further evidence of the developments that have taken place. The outcomes of this initial analysis will then have to be reviewed, when updated and more detailed information is available on the actual work of the DPs within the framework of Action 2.

The transversal review includes DPs selected by Member States as well as by the Czech Republic, which is funding EQUAL-type projects under the PHARE programme. Other Candidate countries will join in due course, Hungary in particular, but information on their partnerships is not included in the database yet. To simplify matters, the use of the term "Member States" in this document includes the Czech Republic.

The methodological approach involved:

- a grouping of DP priorities for action under the specific objectives and activities set out by each individual Member State in its Community Initiative Programme (CIP) which are summarised in Annex 3 of the EQUAL Guide for Transnationality.
- a transversal review, across all Member States and the Czech Republic, of common issues and priorities that emerge from the work plans of the DPs.

The results can help identifying thematic areas for the work of the ETGs that relate to specific priorities of different Member States.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE THEMATIC REPORTS

The following thematic reports are organised around three points:

- An outline of the policy context, with a view to identify policy gaps that EQUAL innovative practice might fill and to consider how EQUAL could best impact on wider policy;
- An analysis of the work plans of the Development Partnerships approved under Action 1, and clustering around the issues addressed and the activities proposed by the DPs;
- The identification of mainstream policy targets and proposals for future thematic work at EU level; as well a set of questions or hypotheses that could be discussed in the thematic workshops.

4. MAINSTREAMING VEHICLES AND MECHANISMS

The central aim of EQUAL is to pilot innovative solutions to employment problems in order that best practice can be identified and transferred into mainstream policies. EQUAL creates two new vehicles for ensuring that the cycle of innovation-transfer and mainstreaming is effectively completed:

- The Development Partnerships themselves
- Thematic clusters of Development Partnerships and other actors working around particular problems or methodologies.

The latter are designed to help the lessons from pilot initiatives to “snowball” in order to achieve the maximum impact on mainstream policies.

Mainstreaming successful models and best practice in EQUAL is thus built into the set-up of the programme itself.

- **The composition of the DPs** reveals that the requirement of bringing relevant key actors into the composition of the partnerships has generally been met. It is too early to tell if the impressive lists of political decision-makers, authorities, companies, employers and unions and NGOs will result in feasible and pro-active mainstreaming concepts.
- So far, only a few DPs refer to explicit **national mainstreaming strategies**. When mentioning mainstreaming activities in their work plans, the vast majority of the DPs refer to different forms of disseminating information, via publications, web sites, and the organisation of conferences, forums, workshops, etc. It is therefore important to repeat that the national Managing Authorities now have the responsibility to organise networking, dissemination and mainstreaming. They will in particular establish thematic networks to help the DPs identify, assess, and test the multiplier potential of their innovations, and to decide collectively which good practices should be disseminated widely or how they should be adapted to different contexts.
- At EU level, **European Thematic Groups** will be set up, which will ensure that new methods of combating discrimination and inequalities are disseminated, reproduced or transferred from one country to another, and contribute to the development of the European and national employment and social inclusion policies.

THEME 5: ASYLUM SEEKERS

1. POLICY CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUAL

1.1. CURRENT POLICIES AT MEMBER STATE LEVEL

There are important variations in the Asylum Seekers (AS) policies across Member States which affect the right to work and access to vocational training programmes of AS that inform the activities that can be undertaken within the framework of EQUAL. Although a Community Initiative, EQUAL can only support DP activity which operates within existing national legislation.

1.1.1. The Right to Work

In five Member States - Denmark, France, Ireland¹, Italy, Luxembourg - AS are not entitled to seek employment during the full period of their asylum determination procedure. In some other Member States, AS are normally entitled to seek employment after their initial asylum application has been deemed admissible (for example, Greece and Portugal). A range of other conditions and restrictions apply in other Member States. Such restrictions include: a minimum number of months of residence (for example, 12 months in Germany, in Sweden applicants have immediate access to the labour market if the relevant Authority believes that his/her procedure will last more than 4 months); the need to verify that a job offer cannot be filled by a national or a legal resident (Finland and Spain); limiting employment to specific sectors or number of hours per week or days per month (Finland and the Netherlands).

1.1.2. Access to Vocational Training Programmes

With the exception of Austria, France, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom, all Member States offer state-funded language tuition for AS². Without exception, all the Member States also allow or require the children of AS to enter into compulsory school education.

State-supported training programmes for AS are currently implemented in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. In Denmark, the government sub-contracts work and school-related training activities to private firms and educational institutes. All AS aged between 17 and 25 are offered at least ten hours of vocational training each week. In Finland, work and training activities are organised at reception centres. Asylum Seekers who refuse to participate in these activities may have their living allowance reduced. In Sweden, all adult AS living in residence centres must participate in organised activities for at least 20 hours a week.

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are active in all Member States in the provision of different forms of vocational training.

1.2. FLOWS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS: PATTERNS ACROSS THE EU

The activities of EQUAL need to be seen in the context of the overall pattern of AS in the EU. The nature and scale of issues addressed by the theme vary within the EU. Both the levels of asylum applications and the rates of recognition are uneven across the EU.

1 However, in 1999, Ireland's Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform granted the right to work to those asylum-seekers who had been in the country for more than 12 months, and who had entered the country before 26 July 1999.

2 In Italy language tuition is offered in some cases by local authorities, while in Ireland there is no "automatic right" to such tuition.

The major characteristics of asylum applications in the EU are:

- Approximately 400,000 new asylum applications are lodged in the EU each year. The time taken to process applications is prolonged and hence the numbers of AS awaiting determinations is well in excess of this figure. The average numbers of persons involved in each application is 1.6.
- More than three quarters of the applications are made in five Member States (the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France).
- Recognition rates in Member States under the Geneva Convention criteria range from 1% to 35%; some decrease in recognition is apparent for some member states.
- The main countries of origin of AS vary greatly according to Member State and are influenced by historical, geographical and cultural factors. However the EU as a whole is affected by developments in particular countries. For example, in 2001 Iraq generated over 10% of the total asylum flows in the EU, Afghanistan over 8% and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia around 4%
- New forms of demand for protection, which do not readily comply with the criteria of the Geneva Convention, (notably demands resulting from the conflicts in the Balkans), have increased in recent years and subsidiary forms of protection have been granted by Member States.
- Criminal networks have been able to exploit the diversity of applicable rules and enforcement mechanisms among the Member States (a phenomenon often referred to as "asylum shopping") leading to an increase in human trafficking.

Typically AS arrive in the host country traumatised, concerned about those they have left behind and lacking language skills and knowledge of the host country. They are likely to face a prolonged wait for their case to be determined during which they have only very limited means to sustain themselves. The DP address these needs in a variety of ways.

1.3. EU POLICY CONTEXT

Given the varied national policies and the wide-ranging aims of EQUAL the moves at the EU level to promote greater harmonisation on immigration and asylum policy and legal instruments are relevant. It is intended that this harmonisation will lead to faster and more efficient decisions on asylum applications so reducing the risk that asylum is used as means of economic migration and the tendency for secondary movements of AS after they have entered the EU embarking on so-called 'asylum shopping'.

The proposed Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is to include in the first phase the following five 'building blocks':

- A clear and workable determination of the State responsible for the examination of an asylum application,
- Common standards for a fair and efficient asylum procedure,
- Common minimum conditions of reception for AS
- Approximation of rules on the recognition and content of refugee status
- Subsidiary forms of protection offering an appropriate status to any person in need of such protection.

It is anticipated that, in the second phase of the CEAS, a Single Asylum Procedure will be adopted at the EU level, as well as uniform status, bringing together the Geneva Convention and subsidiary protection statuses.

With regard to entry to the labour market the European Council has suggested in its proposal for a Directive on the reception of AS that:

"Member States shall determine a period of time, starting from the date on which an application for asylum has been lodged, during which an applicant shall not have access to the labour market. If a decision in first instance has not been taken one year after the presentation of an application for asylum and this delay cannot be attributed to the applicant, Member States shall authorise access to the labour market for the applicant subject to the conditions laid down by the Member States. Access to the labour market shall not be withdrawn during appeals

procedures, where an appeal against a negative decision in a regular procedure has suspensive effect, until such time as a negative decision on the appeal is notified."

The same proposal suggests that AS are allowed access to vocational training. At the time of drafting this paper political agreement has been reached on the draft Directive, and subject to adoption by the European Parliament the Directive should be formally adopted during May 2002. The draft Directive specifies that Member States have 24 months for transposition - which means that by May 2004 Member States will be required to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the Directive.

Such harmonisation is considered as likely to improve current situation where, as a consequence of the employment restrictions in some Member States and the often cumbersome procedures only a small number of Asylum Seekers are legally employed. Access to illegal employment and low paid work not meeting basic employment standards is a possible consequence.

The socio-professional integration of AS does not currently form part of the European Employment Strategy (EES).

1.4. OTHER EU PROGRAMMES

The main EU programmes that concern AS are:

- The European Refugee Fund (ERF), and
- The action programme for administrative co-operation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration (ARGO)

The European Refugee Fund

The ERF was established in 2000. It has a budget of 216 million euros for the period 2001-2004. The ERF aims to support and encourage the activities of Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving AS, refugees and displaced persons.

The three main types of Member States' actions supported by the ERF are:

- Conditions for reception
- Integration of persons whose stay in the Member States is of a lasting and/or stable nature.
- Repatriation provided that the persons concerned have not acquired a new nationality and have not left the territory of the Member State.

The ERF also supports on the initiative of the EC (DG Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)) innovatory actions or actions of interest to the Community as a whole. Some 20 ERF Community Actions have been approved so far for 2000 and 2001 that include various networking activities, awareness raising and information campaigns, and studies on legislation, policy and practice relevant to one of the three ERF types of action. Prior to the establishment of the ERF the Commission funded directly a similar range of activities through various budget lines.

Action programme for administrative co-operation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration (ARGO)

The objective of ARGO is to reinforce the effectiveness of the relevant procedures in the field of asylum, visas, immigration and the control of external borders to assist the national administrations in the implementation of the relevant Community legislation.

It is expected that the decision establishing ARGO will be adopted by the Council in May 2002. The ARGO programme is managed by DG JHA.

1.5. OTHER EUROPEAN NETWORKING ACTIVITY

The ETG will need to take account of and engage with relevant European networking activities involving NGOs. In the case of AS this includes the work of *The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)*. ECRE is the main European level organiser of co-operation activities among NGO concerned with Asylum Seekers and refugees. ECRE's principal activities include: policy

development and research; advocacy; legal analysis; information services to members; and networking and capacity-building in South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe.

ECRE is engaged in the promotion of and participation in projects on asylum policy and refugee integration supported by the EU. Further details are provided in Annex 1.

2. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS.

2.1. THE KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED BY EQUAL AND THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The objectives of the Member State Community Initiative Programmes (CIP) for EQUAL elaborate the priorities for the AS Theme. In particular:

- Most CIP include social as well as labour market integration objectives. These objectives include: improving the 'personal situation' (Austria) the 'quality of reception' (France, Belgium, Italy) 'living conditions' (Greece) and 'social integration' (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Portugal); and providing support to AS to 'play a role in society and manage their own lives' (Finland) and to cope 'with socio-cultural norms' (Spain).
- Two CIP emphasise objectives to combat discrimination against AS and to improve community relations through 'educating people about the needs of Asylum Seekers' (Finland) and promoting and developing an 'antiracist and intercultural approach' (Ireland).
- Three CIP include objectives that highlight the needs of particular groups of Asylum Seekers: 17-25 year olds and women (Denmark); 17-24 year olds (Finland); and, 'under age' asylum seekers (Netherlands). The activities identified in the French CIP explicitly distinguish between Asylum Seekers (AS) and those admitted under humanitarian evacuation programmes.

2.2. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES RELATING TO PRIORITIES IN CIPS

A wide range of activities is identified in the CIPs around half of which are particular to one CIP. The activities can be classified into four groups. First, those concerning the reception of AS in the host country. Second, those concerned with integration of AS and those who have received refugee status into the labour market. Third, those that are concerned with assisting returnees. Finally, those oriented towards the infrastructure to assist AS. The activities most frequently cited in the CIP are: language training (7 Member States); vocational guidance and advice on labour market orientation (6); Mental health and psycho-social support (4); education and training for the country of origin (4); recognition/validation of skills competencies and qualifications (4); and, awareness raising within the wider community.

Although there is a relatively small number of DPs, around three quarters of the activities identified in the CIPs are being taken forward by one or more DP. However, some activities identified in the CIPs will not be taken forward by the DPs in particular countries including: identifying the needs of traumatised AS, improved support of young AS, legal support, skills audits and studies and evaluation. Member States may want to consider the implications of this in preparation for the second round of EQUAL in 2004.

2.3. THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

46 EQUAL DP have received funding for Action 1 within the AS Theme. Table 1 below shows the range of activities pursued by these DP. According to the generic list of activities recorded in the ECDB the majority of activities of the DP in the AS Theme provide assistance to persons, in particular: Training; Guidance, counselling; and, Integrated measures. The three most frequently occurring activities concerning support to structures are: Awareness raising, information, publicity; Guidance and social services; and Conception for training programmes, certification. The majority of the DPs are oriented towards reception and integration of AS rather than the needs of returnees.

2.4. ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Innovation is a key issue in EQUAL and the DPs have identified 54 activities as being particularly innovative. The activity most frequently cited (4 Member States) is new combinations of theoretical educational and practical testing/vocational training. The other area where innovation is stressed is in terms of the involvement of new actors in activities concerned with support to the socio-professional integration of AS. By and large these activities identified as innovative by DPs are likely to be innovative in their own context rather than innovative at the European level

The average number of partners for each DP in the AS theme is just over 8. However, there is a wide variation between the average numbers of partners in each Member State. Indeed the countries with the largest numbers of DP range from an average of 19 partners in Germany to an average of 3 partners per DP in France.

So far it has not been possible to identify with precision which policies/activities are anticipated to be candidates for mainstreaming either into national or European policy/programmes. The information available on the DP does however identify the main processes through which it is envisaged that mainstreaming takes place. These include in order of importance: involving policy makers in the DP (cited by DP from 10 Member States); involving public agencies who themselves have close contacts with policy makers in the DPs (8); and through transnational thematic networking amongst DP (5). (Table A in Annex 2).

It is envisaged that the mainstreaming work at DP level will be complemented by national thematic networking activity that will validate the results of DPs and the work of ETG at the European Level. However as there are only 46 DP within the AS theme and in 7 Member States there is only one DP, the low number of DP may limit the usefulness of thematic networking at Member State level within the AS Theme. In this respect the activities of DP are relevant to the policy domains of a wide range of government agencies, especially JHA. It will be important to involve them in ETG work in the Theme.

Regarding the AS Theme there are several cross cutting issues within EQUAL:

- There are similarities between some DP within the AS Theme and those within Theme 1B (combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market)
- A number of the DP in the AS Theme are concerned with enabling the development of entrepreneurial skills amongst AS with a view to them being applied in their countries of origin and some of the labour market integration measures concern the social economy. Thus there are links with both Theme 2C Entrepreneurship -business creation and Theme 2D Entrepreneurship – social economy.
- AS are identified as a target group of DP within other themes.
- There may be relevant good practice lessons which come from the DP in other themes dealing with refugees

As far as the horizontal issues within EQUAL are concerned there are three aspects that emerge from the analysis of the prospective activities of DP.

Firstly, empowerment has a special relevance to DP in the AS Theme. AS have very few rights and may experience restrictions over their freedom of movement, they may lack language skills and knowledge of the host country, they may be traumatised and are thus particularly vulnerable. In these circumstances empowerment may be furthered by access to information on basic human rights, the provision of interpretation facilities and mediators as well as the engagement of AS in the organisation of the DP.

Secondly, the local dimension is important to DP within the AS Theme. There is a tendency for AS to concentrate in particular localities, often as a consequence of communities from the country of origin existing in these areas. This may create pressures on local services and/or provide a basis for local development where there is high labour demand. A number of DP in the

AS Theme stress their contribution to regional economic development objectives and several include Local Authorities as key actors.

Thirdly, several DP are proposing to apply Information and communications technologies (ICT) to improve access to information pertinent to the needs of AS or to assist with vocational training. A number of DP in the AS Theme include in their portfolio of activities the development of ICT skills.

The formation of ETG needs to take into account the potential contribution of DP in the AS Theme to contribute to these horizontal issues.

Table 1 -The activities being pursued by the DP

<p>Reception</p>	<p>Advice, education and training</p>
<p><u>Key activities</u> : Mental health and psycho-social support Improve facilities</p> <p><u>Processes</u>: New clearance structures, quicker processes</p> <p><u>Services and information</u>: Translation and interpretation Information on migration Promotion of equal opportunities in access to and use of support services Legal support to Improve the legal standing of AS</p> <p><u>Other</u>: Celebrate cultural background Debates among AS about xenophobia or discrimination encountered in the labour market</p>	<p><u>Advice</u>: Vocational guidance/advice & labour market orientation Counselling</p> <p><u>Training</u>: Language, basic skills, IT. Develop appropriate education and training: modular programme; schools based family learning; ensure training is accessible</p> <p><u>Recognition/validation of skills and qualifications</u> Develop tools for skills assessment</p> <p><u>Other</u> : Promotion of school leaving certificates Voluntary work to supplement language and vocational training</p>
<p>Employment</p>	<p>Capacity building</p>
<p><u>Job search</u>: Improve the work of the employment service Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate support</p> <p><u>Transition to work</u>: Test approaches to swift transition to labour market once refugee status has been granted Job placements Employment support schemes promoting job opportunities</p> <p><u>Other</u>: Promote bilingualism in business Information on using IT Empowering AS to become more self reliant and less dependent on existing support service</p>	<p><u>Awareness raising</u>: - within wider community, and politicians - Multi-cultural training for staff working with AS - among employers & social partners Information for staff on legal procedures & available services</p> <p><u>Networking</u> of existing support structures within member states - European level exchanges of staff</p> <p><u>Other</u>: Studies, monitoring and evaluation Develop tool for skills assessment</p>

<p>Repatriation</p>
<p>Help for reintegration in country of origin Education and training Develop skills to start a business Job matching in third country or country of origin</p>

3. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUPS (ETG)

The workshops in Barcelona will launch ETG, discuss the main trends and policy priorities at EU level and identify priority issues to be addressed by the ETG.

The following points can be stressed from the above discussion:

- There are important differences between Member States in the regulations affecting the entry of Asylum Seekers to the labour market. (Section 1).
- The EU driven policy context is likely to lead to a closer harmonisation of regulations affecting Asylum Seekers. (Section 1). EQUAL DP have the potential to develop tools which will help prepare for these changes.
- The EU has supported through in particular the ERF a number of activities with similar objectives to EQUAL DP, albeit activities that do not necessarily have a strong labour market orientation. This body of activity is a potential source of good practice lessons. (Section 1).
- There is relevant networking activity at the EU level involving NGO and institutions, most of which is supported by the EU. (Section 1).
- There are strong commonalities in the needs of AS in different Member States particularly when flows of AS from particular countries affect many Member States simultaneously. (Section 1).
- It is envisaged in the CIP of several Member States that the EQUAL projects will cover a wide range of services for Asylum Seekers. (Section 2). This range relates to the activities of a large number of different public agencies.
- There are only 46 DP within the AS Theme. In 7 Member States there is only one DP. Although there is a strong role for results to be validated nationally, the low number of DP potentially limits the usefulness of thematic networking at Member State level within the AS Theme. (Section 2). This could lead to the need for an early and comprehensive comparison of good practice across the EU led by the ETG.
- The majority of the activities anticipated in the CIP are being pursued by the selected DP. In addition there are a number of new, mainly detailed, activities not foreseen in the CIP that are taking place. (Section 2).
- The activity most frequently cited as innovative (4 Member States) is new combinations of theoretical educational and practical testing/vocational training. The other area where innovation is stressed is in terms of the involvement of new actors in activities concerned with support to the socio professional integration of AS. (Section 2). Most DP activities are innovative in their context rather than innovative at the European level.
- The information available on the DP identifies the main processes through which it is envisaged that mainstreaming takes place. These include, in order of importance: involving policy makers in the DP; involving public agencies who themselves have close contacts with policy makers in the DP; and, through transnational thematic networking amongst DP. (Section 2.). The activities of DP are relevant to the policy domains of a wide range of government agencies, especially JHA ministries. It will be important to involve such agencies in the work of the ETG.
- There are three cross cutting issues between the AS Theme and other themes within EQUAL. These concern in particular the Theme 1B (combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market) and Theme 2C and Theme 2B entrepreneurship (Section 2).
- The activities of DP in the AS theme are especially pertinent to the horizontal issues of empowerment, ICT and local development (Section 2).

When considering the work of the ETG we need to consider its role and the context. The primary objectives are: to identify good practice across the AS Theme; to consider how it compares with non-EQUAL activity which is being funded; to identify how activity in the AS Theme fits with emerging EU policy; and, to develop an effective dissemination strategy.

In addition the work must be informed by the work of the DPs and must take account of the role of the Member States in validating good practice.

Having set out the policy backdrop and identified the issues being addressed the following sections provide a focus for the work of the ETG.

3.1. POTENTIAL TO HELP IMPLEMENT EU POLICY.

There is clear potential for the work of the EQUAL DPs to develop good practice that could inform the way in which Member States implement elements of the EU-wide harmonisation of Asylum Seekers policy. The area which is likely to be most fruitful is the articles in Directive (CM(2001)181) which relate to access to the labour market and vocational training. Although most of the sub-themes have a bearing on the overall policy, in order to maximise the impact, the ETG will need to identify the types of products and processes which are likely to be most relevant and transferable. These could for example include innovative education and training packages.

3.2. POTENTIAL CLUSTERS AND SUB THEMES FOR THE ETG

The analysis of the activities of DP and the associated issues affecting AS in the EU suggests that the prospective ETG could cluster its work in a number of ways, in particular there may be merit in organising ETG work around six 'sub themes' or areas:

- The reception of AS with particular emphasis on the, language, vocational and labour market issues related to particular countries from where high numbers of AS are originating and applying for asylum in several Member States.
- The integration of AS into employment and the avoidance of illicit employment in the host country.
- The access of AS to vocational training, and the application of innovative vocational training packages.
- The reintegration of AS into the labour markets in their country of origin.
- The recognition and validation of the skills/qualifications of AS within the EU and particular Member States.
- The capacity of organisations to address the needs of AS and the involvement of key actors including social partners.

In addition consideration could be given to focusing on an area concerned with influencing public attitudes towards AS as this an objective stressed in the EQUAL plans and by several DP.

On the basis of the emphasis given in the CIP and through the activities of the DP there is a case for priority being given to the sub theme concerned with vocational guidance and training packages. The workshops in Barcelona will provide an opportunity to consider these possibilities.

3.3. PARTNERSHIPS - HOW DOES EQUAL FIT WITH OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITY AND WHO ELSE NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

When considering aspects of innovation, good practice and mainstreaming it will be important for the ETG to take account of the other relevant activity that is pursuing objectives similar to the CIP and DP within the AS Theme. This includes the activities of government agencies and NGO.

It should also take account of any relevant good practice that has already emerged from similar activities funded by other EU programmes such as the ERF and at the Member State level. For example, the existing good practice guides on employment and vocational training that have been produced by ECRE which while focused primarily on recognised refugees, may offer a range of experiences and recommendations of direct value to the socio-professional integration of AS authorised to work.

It would be useful to consider the strategies that are being put in place within the Member States to enable the DPs to work effectively with the varied organisations that have a stake in this work. This collaboration should enable the relatively small number of DPs to have a strong impact within the Member States.

In addition the ETG should consider whether any Europeans level organisation besides ECRE need to be involved in the ETG to ensure that is it able to take account of similar work.

3.4. IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICE

One of the key tasks of the ETG is to identify good practice across the EU. A grid is included in the mainstreaming paper to sift aspects of good practice. This will complement work at the national level that reviews the activities of individual DPs. Given that there is a relatively small number of DPs in the AS Theme the work at the EU level may be particularly important.

Assessing innovation across the EU is an important feature of the work of the ETG. There are likely to be innovative activities in each of the 'clusters' or sub themes identified above. For example, skills audits, vocational training policies, curricula and delivery methods tailored to the particular needs of AS are at an embryonic stage. It is anticipated that DP will develop vocational training tools with wide applicability in the EU and that these will be innovative. These include packages targeted on both AS granted refugee status and rejected AS reintegrating in their countries of origin.

It will be helpful for the ETG to consider how best to assess the usefulness and transferability of such tools. Potential criteria include: is their usefulness greatest when for example, there are flows of AS from a particular country into several Member States?

4. QUESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS

1. **Impact on EU policy:** What are the areas of policy in which EQUAL can expect to impact? What type of products and processes being developed by the DPs are most likely to help inform the implementation of EU policy ?

2. **Clusters:** Do the sub themes identified above provide a logical basis for structuring the work of the ETG and in particular identifying good practice? Are there other relevant activities that fall outside the scope of these clusters?

3. **EQUAL In the wider context:** What approaches have Member States adopted to ensure that EQUAL takes account of other similar developments? Who is involved? Who else needs to be involved in the ETG?

4. **Identification of good practice:** taking account of the common issues already identified for all ETGs what are the other key features of good practice which relate to AS? How will this be assessed?

5. **Limited scale of the AS Theme.** Given the relatively small number of AS DPs within each Member State, in what way might the ETG take advantage from this?

6 **Cross cutting and horizontal issues.** How should the ETG for the AS Theme link with the activities of other ETG to cover cross cutting and horizontal issues?

7 **Performance measurement.** What are the key success criteria of the ETG?

ANNEX 1 EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES [ECRE]

ECRE is an umbrella organisation of 72 refugee-assisting NGO agencies in 28 countries working towards fair and humane policies for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. ECRE's principal activities include policy development and research, advocacy, legal analysis, information services to members, networking, and capacity building in South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe.

ELENA (The European Legal Network on Asylum)

ELENA was established by ECRE as a forum for legal practitioners who aim to promote the highest standards of human rights in the treatment of refugees, Asylum Seekers and other persons in need of international protection. The ELENA network aims in particular:

- To provide and reinforce contacts between practising lawyers and legal counsellors in different European countries who work on asylum cases;
- To facilitate the exchange of information and experience between these lawyers and legal counsellors;
- To study the implementation of national and international law relating to refugees;
- To organise seminars on specific topics relating to refugee law and making results available to practising lawyers;
- To promote the development of national networks of lawyers specialising in asylum law.

ELENA maintains close co-operation with the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the UNHCR.

Networking on Integration

Since 1997 ECRE has worked through a number of its member agencies leading on specialist themes and networking with European funding. This work has contributed to the identification of new methods of working and have facilitated a better understanding of useful policy frameworks and of the elements of good practice in the selected themes. Information is available on www.ecre.org/erfproject and on www.refugeenet.org, although the latter is no longer active. Issues covered include: Education; Vocational training; Language tuition; Health; Elderly Refugees; Traumatized Refugees; Housing; Community and Culture; Reception; Voluntary return. The main activities and outputs from the networking to date include:

- ECRE's position on the integration of refugees
- A database on existing Integration Activities within many of the above thematic areas;
- A series of Good Practice Guides on Refugee Integration, which give examples of practical and transferable solutions to obstacles to refugee integration in different Member States.
- Work on refugee perceptions of integration
- The organisation of EU conferences and meetings of NGOs.

An existing project, managed by ECRE and supported by the ERF Community Action on "Good Practice in the Reception and Integration of Refugees: Analysing new approaches in Policy and Practice" which looks at Educational advice; Elderly refugees; Traumatized refugees. Included in the ECRE project is the following initiative:

("POLIS Asyl") Co-operation with Local Authorities.

POLIS Asyl is a network activity is being developed by the Italian Refugee Council (CIR) concerning Co-operation with Local Authorities. It brings together the asylum/refugees affairs officers of 12 European municipalities with a view to discussing:

- National legislation;
- The competencies of the municipalities in the different member States with regard to the provision of assistance to Asylum Seekers and refugees;
- Examples of activities and good practice in the different member cities of POLIS Asyl;
- Examples of different funding schemes, particularly as regards funding arrangements between central government and local authorities;
- Other policy strategies;
- The relationship between local authorities and NGOs operating in the member cities.

ANNEX 2 - TABLE A - THE MAINSTREAMING PROCESSES ENVISAGED BY THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Aspect	Mainstreaming processes	AT	Belg	Beltr	DK	FI	FR	DE	GR	IE	IT	LU	NL	PT	ES	SE	UK	Total			
Structure and composition of DP	Mainstreaming into national policy making by including policy makers within the DP	•	•		•			•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	11			
	Mainstreaming into national policy making by including public agencies with close contacts to policy makers within the DP	•	•	•				•	•	•			•	•	•			9			
	Through refugee councils that are well integrated into national policy making on AS issues participating in DP																•	1			
	One DP partner participating in another DP which will promote exchange of good practice between DPs																	•	1		
Links and networking at national level	Transfer of new models for work & study activities to other reception centres in the country and to the rest of society					•												•	2		
	Working group developing recommendations and advocacy for incorporation of good practice in national asylum policy								•										1		
	DP working towards political implementation of legal & professional principles underlying the provision of its offered qualifications								•										1		
	DP links to the Cross-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees & Asylum Seekers to ensure lessons fed to policy makers																		•	1	
	Participation of DP members in national policy forum																		•	1	
	Framework for exerting pressure on national policy									•										1	
	Contribution to policy making at national & transnational level										•									1	
	Participation of professionals from administration & law, health & advisory centres, and political & professional associations in support of the DP project for regional and									•										1	
Transnational Networking and links	Transnational networking with DP transnational partners and through thematic networking	•			•			•							•	•			5		
	Using a "dynamic partnership model" ensuring exchange of information and lesson between DP members																		•	1	
	Lobbying at European level on matters of reception & integration														•					1	
	Exchange experience across the DP in order to be able to adapt local procedures to good practice in partner member states									•										1	
	Transfer of new models for work & study activities to other EU countries						•													1	
Specific Activities	Electronic dissemination of project information nationally and transnationally								•		•									2	
	Conference for discussing white paper with representatives of local government, political parties, welfare organisations, foreigners and the public.								•											1	
	European conference									•										1	
	New teaching methods used with AS are to be disseminated by the National Board of Education																	•		1	
	Creation of knowledge bank of DP projects & lessons at transnational level				•															1	
	Production of a publication by the asylum seekers about experiences acquired during the project												•								1
	Contributing a white paper on the situation of AS, civil war & de-facto refugees									•											1
Total																				28	

Note:

There was no information available about mainstreaming in the French project descriptions and no public authorities or policy makers were involved, which would have allowed for indirect mainstreaming through the composition of the DP.