

Equal - a major new initiative

Malcolm Wicks MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, welcomes the new programme.

This first edition of the new **Equal** newsletter gives me the opportunity to welcome the Programme and its potential to make a real impact in combating discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

October saw the selection of the 77 Development Partnerships (DPs) across Great Britain (GB). These broad-based partnerships will form the basis of this new European Social Fund (ESF) initiative. The Development Partnerships will involve policy-makers, practitioners and innovators, working together to test and encourage new ways of promoting employability and entrepreneurship and addressing issues such as social exclusion and discrimination.

Equal provides a new opportunity to develop new ways of looking at old problems. The mix of local, regional and national partnerships can bring experience from a wide variety of circumstances to inform national policies and initiatives. One of the key principles of **Equal** is innovation. It is central to the work of Development Partnerships and we can look forward to identifying some really progressive ideas aimed at producing

novel approaches to difficult labour-market issues.

Equal can add value to all aspects of plans for enhancing employment opportunity in the country. It can contribute, for example, to the recommendations of the Policy Action Teams (PATs) on Jobs and Skills. Funding through the **Equal** Programme will help groups to break down barriers to work, for instance in helping to combat racism in the workforce. Working with local partners will help to take forward the Social Exclusion Unit's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy for making it easier for communities to influence decisions.

It is important that we learn from **Equal**, and to that end a particular feature of the Programme is the process of feeding back to those responsible for policy in each of the themes. Thematic networking groups have been established for each **Equal** theme to assist in driving this process. They will manage dissemination of the DPs' activities back to those responsible for developing policies, so that we can see the fruits of **Equal** in the way we address labour-market discrimination and inequality in the future.



Malcolm Wicks

Alongside their national activities, the Development Partnerships will be working in close co-operation with partnerships in other Member States and countries seeking to join the European Union (EU). This European programme demonstrates the value to Britain of being part of Europe. Working with partners in other countries offers the opportunity to exchange expertise and to develop new approaches to training and job creation, adding value to national initiatives.

I wish the Development Partnerships well in their work and very much look forward to seeing successful outcomes to their activities.

Malcolm Wicks

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Equal News

Equal News is produced by the GB **Equal** Support Unit on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), European Social Fund Division. For further details contact the GB Support Unit at the address given on page 8.

What is Equal?

Funded through the European Social Fund, Equal is an initiative which tests and promotes new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market. It includes action to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

Equal operates across identified thematic fields which embrace the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy and support for asylum seekers. **Equal** funds activities implemented by strategic partnerships called Development Partnerships. The Programme will employ a fresh approach to combating discrimination and inequality experienced by those seeking access to the labour market and those already within it.

THEMATIC APPROACH

Equal is different from the earlier ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives and the Objective 1, 2 and 3 Structural Fund programmes,

in its thematic approach to testing new ways of delivering policy priorities. Overall, the aim of this thematic approach is to explore new ways of tackling the problems common to different types of discrimination and inequality, rather than focusing on a specific target group. Each Development Partnership will address one thematic field.

TRANSNATIONALITY

Transnational co-operation is a central feature of **Equal**. Links with a transnational partner are a requirement of participation in the Programme. The transnational emphasis ensures that lessons are learned across Member States, and that examples

of good practice are exchanged. There will also be transnational co-operation among national networks of Development Partnerships through thematic networks at European level. This activity will be co-ordinated by the European Commission. More details will be available in 2002.

MAINSTREAMING

Equal has been designed so that its actions inform policy developments and ensure that policy-makers can learn from the Programme's activities. This process is called mainstreaming. Specific funding has been set aside to support this aspect of the Programme.

Table 1 Equal thematic priorities

Pillar One - Employability	Pillar Two - Entrepreneurship	Pillar Three - Adaptability
<p>THEME A</p> <p>Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all.</p> <p>THEME B</p> <p>Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market and providing opportunities to promote potential for ethnic minorities within the world of work.</p>	<p>THEME C</p> <p>Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas.</p> <p>THEME D</p> <p>Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs.</p>	<p>THEME E</p> <p>Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market.</p> <p>THEME F</p> <p>Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies.</p>

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is also a central feature of **Equal**. In practice, it means that those who are targeted for support also have an opportunity to influence the design and evaluation of the proposed activities.

THEMATIC FIELDS

Equal operates in thematic fields defined in the context of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy: Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, and Equal Opportunities. There are two themes for each pillar. In addition to these eight themes, the Programme also supports a further theme, comprising activities designed to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

There are thus nine thematic priorities for **Equal**, eight of which will be taken forward in GB. The themes are set out in Table 1.

Pillar Four - Equal opportunities for women and men	Asylum seekers
<p>THEME G*</p> <p>Reconciling family and professional life, as well as the re-integration of men and women who have left the labour market, by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services.</p> <p>THEME H</p> <p>Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation.</p> <p><small>*The GB programme is not taking part in Theme G. Instead, actions related to the work/life balance have been integrated into the Adaptability pillar, and issues related to access to employment are covered by the Employability pillar.</small></p>	<p>THEME I</p> <p>Helping the integration of asylum seekers. Depending on the official status of the asylum seeker - an extremely complex area, with variations among Member States - assistance may be for new ways of helping to access the labour market, or to provide training for unsuccessful asylum seekers prior to their leaving the country.</p>

Theme	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	AS (I)
Austria	•	•		•	•			•	•
Belgium/Fr	•		•		•		•		•
Belgium/Nl	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Denmark	•				•			•	•
Finland	•	•		•		•		•	•
France	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Germany	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Greece	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ireland	•		•		•	•	•		•
Italy	•	•		•	•			•	•
Luxembourg	•						•		•
Netherlands	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Portugal	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Spain	•	•	•			•	•	•	•
Sweden	•		•		•			•	•
UKgb	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•
UKni	•							•	•

Finding new partners

The GB **Equal** Support Unit is offering a service to DPs to help them find new partners. If you are looking for another organisation to join your DP and you need some help with locating the right organisation, the Support Unit will post your details on the **Equal** website.

Simply submit the form called Domestic Partner Search, available to download from the documentation section of the website. Send in the completed form to the GB Support Unit. This service is available in relation to locating partners within England, Scotland and Wales only, and is a separate service from the transnational partner search facility offered through the European Commission website.

Table 3

Breakdown of DPs in GB by theme and national focus

Pillar	Theme	Total	DPs based in England or GB-wide	Wales	Scotland
Employability	A	24	21	2	1
	B	9	8	0	1
Entrepreneurship	C	9	7	1	1
	D	8	7	0	1
Adaptability	E	15	14	0	1
	F	5	4	0	1
Equal Opportunities	H	4	3	0	1
	I*	3	3	*	*
TOTAL		77	67	3	7

* One UK-wide application is included under Theme I, and includes a partner in Northern Ireland.

THEMATIC NETWORKING

To support the work on each of the eight themes, there are Thematic Networking Groups made up of officials from the relevant government departments, equality commissions and social partners. More information about the Thematic Networking Groups can be found on the **Equal** website.

MEMBER STATES' PRIORITIES

Each Member State has chosen its own priority themes; some have chosen all nine. A quick

reference list is given in Table 2. GB is covering eight themes. Northern Ireland (UKni) is participating in themes A, H and I only.

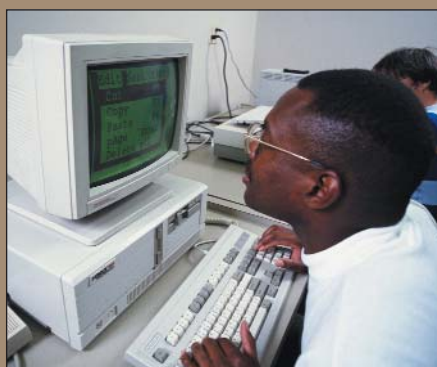
STAGES OF THE PROGRAMME

Equal operates in stages called Actions. The first stage, Action 1, began on November 15 2001 and lasts up to six months. During Action 1, Development Partnerships finalise their constitution and prepare their programme of activities. Action 2 covers the main implementation activities of work programmes approved

at the end of Action 1, and begins on 15 May 2002.

EQUAL IN GREAT BRITAIN

In GB, a total of 77 Development Partnerships have received approval for funding under the **Equal** First Call. Sixty-seven DPs will focus on meeting priorities at national, regional or local level. Seven DPs have a specific focus in Scotland, and three in Wales. One DP application submitted under Theme I is UK-wide and will include a partner in Northern Ireland. Details of the DPs are given in Table 3 ■



Equal website

www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/forums

The **Equal** website now features a discussion forum. Current topics include: transnational working, partnership working, equal opportunities and empowerment. Any DP can use the site to exchange information and views. New topics can be added at any time.

If you have any suggestions for additional features for the website, please contact the GB Support Unit on the Helpline number:

0121 616 3660

New initiatives for tackling discrimination in the workplace

A key aspect of Equal is to tackle discrimination in the workplace. This article highlights the policy background to this aspect of the Programme, and talks to some of the DPs about their aspirations for making an impact on discriminatory practices in the workplace.

A number of key recommendations regarding discrimination in the labour market are highlighted in the Policy Action Team report 1, on jobs.¹ The report points to the need for employers' active involvement in any successful strategy to increase employment levels in deprived areas and communities. It also draws attention to a particular need for a concerted assault on racial discrimination in the labour market, highlighting the low rates of employment of black and minority ethnic people.

Equal DPs working under all themes will be able to make a contribution to these recommendations.

BRADFORD AIMS HIGH: EQUALITY, TRUST AND RESPECT

Picking up on the need to link people without jobs to employers with jobs to fill.² *Bradford Equality Employment Project (BEEP)* aims to:

“bring together employers and those facing difficulties in accessing the workplace in a transparent way, based on mutual trust and respect, so that employers can have faith in the workforce, and disadvantaged people will believe that their employment prospects really do relate to their abilities rather than attributes such as race, age, gender or disability.”

BEEP is working under theme B, to improve the employment prospects for ethnic minorities. Qudrat Shah, head of equalities at Bradford Metropolitan District Council (MDC), explains why the *BEEP* partnership has chosen to work on this particular theme:

“Bradford is a unique place. The minority ethnic population is growing significantly, with a growing proportion of the current and future workforce coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. In order to remain competitive, employers aim to recruit the best of the local pop-

ulation, and increasingly these individuals will be from minority ethnic populations.”

The DP is being led by Bradford MDC, which hopes that improving the equality and diversity practices of local employers will enable firms to attract and retain the best individuals from all backgrounds. In turn, this will improve firms' competitiveness and that of the local economy, along with the employability prospects of individuals. *BEEP* will build the capacity of local employers by providing training in anti-discrimination practices and good practice in diversity.

¹The Social Exclusion Unit set up 18 Policy Action Teams to respond to the need for a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal. Each PAT produced a report which together constituted the publication 'A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal', produced in January 2001 by the SEU.

²'PAT Report Summaries: A Compendium', p9 (April 2000).

No off-the-peg solutions

Ade Ajadi from the Equality Foundation suggests: “There are no simple off-the-peg solutions for supporting diversity, so organisations need to be able to develop their own techniques to address the

complex issues surrounding diversity within their organisation. In the longer term, the *FEED Partnership* DP's approach will enable organisations to review and improve their own systems for supporting diversity.”





FEED Partnership: "working with employers is essential"

Supporting diversity in the workplace

The *FEED Partnership* led by the Equality Foundation, working under theme A, is also making employers the priority within its programme of activity. Ade Ajadi from the Equality Foundation explains the approach:

"There are ample statistics to show that the cause of high unemployment within certain disadvantaged groups can be partly attributed to the attitudes and decisions made by employers, and not just to lower levels of skills within the disadvantaged groups. Whereas many of the schemes to tackle disadvantage within certain groups focus on addressing the low level of skills within target groups, the *FEED Partnership* DP will focus on tackling the practices and customs of employers and recruiters and promoting proce-

dures that support diversity in the workplace."

The DP will use the European Foundation Quality Management model for reviewing organisations' practices in coping with diversity. This model enables organisations to have a greater insight into how they respond to issues of discrimination. This enables them to respond fully to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act³ and develop sustainable strategies for promoting equal opportunities.

The stated aim of the *FEED Partnership* is to enable organisations to develop their own longer-term, sustainable approaches to addressing diversity and equal opportunities.

³ The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin. The amended Act also imposes general duties on many public authorities to promote racial equality.

A sector-based approach

F*uirich Transport* promoted by NTP Ltd, working under theme H, aims to have a significant impact on the culture of a specific sector - transport. The DP will address issues of gender-related discrimination. According to Glyn Williams of NTP, work by existing ESF projects in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, and Scotland has shown that there are gender issues in the major transport industries. This has led senior officials in the transport industry to press for a project to tackle gender imbalances, not only from an equal opportunities perspective, but also for the sector's future prosperity.

Fuirich has identified five stages where it believes that discrimination and cultural practices lead to gender segregation in the workforce. These

stages range from pre-entry publicity and perceptions through to recruitment practices for graduates and other levels of staff. They also include support, promotion and retention of existing employees.

GLYN WILLIAMS NOTES:

"There is discrimination at all these stages within the sector. Not only is it difficult to gain access through careers guidance and the recruitment phase, but also once working in the sector - for example, among other employees."

Fuirich Transport is heavily into leading-edge information and communication technologies. The DP intends to pilot an interactive website for employers to log in and find out about equal opportunities, and to share good and bad practice.



The DP hopes to have a very significant impact on the transport sector through working with private-sector partners such as Kwikfit, BMW and ARRIVA:

"We believe our DP will be delivering a full package not a part package. We will be researching, delivering and evaluating activities that will tackle the gender imbalance in the transport sector."

Numerous other DPs also have the potential to impact on discrimination in the labour market. The closeness of this issue to the aims of the PAT recommendations means that the potential for successful mainstreaming of outcomes from the DPs is excellent ■

The GB Equal **Support Unit**

England, Scotland and Wales each have their own Support Units to provide support for DPs. The GB Equal Support Unit (ESU) in England co-ordinates Equal in GB and provides support for Equal Thematic Networking Groups and the GB Monitoring Committee. Here, the GB ESU provides a brief description of the team members and their areas of responsibility. Details of the Welsh and Scottish Support Units are on page 8.

EQUAL SENIOR MANAGERS

Helen Benhamou has been working as senior co-ordinator on ADAPT. After completing a BA in French and European Studies at Sussex University, Helen worked for two and a half years at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers as continuing professional development officer. Helen joins the team in January.

Karl Held has previously worked in technical assistance for the ADAPT, Leonardo da Vinci and European Refugee Fund programmes. He also has five years' experience of work in delivering European-funded projects in both the public and private sectors. Karl holds an MA from the University of Liverpool's School of German, a professional Diploma in Translation and is a member of the Institute of Linguists. Karl also joins **Equal** in January.

EQUAL SUPPORT MANAGERS

Oliver Hindle joined the **Equal** Support Unit having previously been an assistant co-ordinator under ADAPT. He

is responsible for **Equal** themes B, H and I. After completing a BA in Economic and Social History and an MA in Historical Research at the University of Hull, Oliver went on to work at Enterprise Link, Birmingham, as a contracts adviser. His work at Enterprise Link gave him a good background in funding for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and project management experience.

Antoinette Morgan has responsibility for **Equal** themes C, D, E and F. She joined the Support Unit from Manchester Enterprises (formerly Manchester Training and Enterprise Council) where she worked in the lifelong learning field before becoming the City Pride and Stockport University for Industry (Ufi) development manager. She has an honours degree in social policy.

Elaine Priest, currently on maternity leave, joined the ADAPT Support Unit as an assistant co-ordinator in August 1998. After completing a French/sociology degree and postgraduate studies in law at Birmingham University, she worked in the Euro Info Centre at Birmingham Chamber of

Commerce, advising and informing companies on European-related matters.

Abdul Qadir is working on theme A of **Equal**. He has extensive experience of European funding and project management, having worked on the ADAPT, EMPLOYMENT (particularly YOUTHSTART) and Leonardo da Vinci programmes. Abdul has also been involved in thematic work for the Department for Education and Skills on key issues faced by disadvantaged young people. He has a postgraduate diploma in career guidance, and an HND in computing.

Will Thompson is working with the GB Support Unit on secondment from the European Social Fund Division. He brings experience of EU programmes, through his work in the Leonardo Technical Assistance Office in Brussels. He was the head of the Leonardo Unit in the University of Sheffield. Prior to that, he was the national co-ordinator for the EU continuing vocational training programme FORCE. Will is based with DWP in Sheffield.

Equal Support Unit director

Margaret James is the new director of the **Equal** Support Unit. She previously worked as the senior co-ordinator for ADAPT second and third-round projects. Her research interests include

education and training policy. Margaret has brought to the Support Unit technical assistance experience gained in the UK and overseas. Margaret has completed an MBA at Warwick Business School.



EQUAL ASSISTANT SUPPORT MANAGERS

Barbara Orthodoxou will be working with DPs on themes A, B, H and I. Barbara has an honours degree in community management. She also has considerable experience of working with voluntary-sector organisations, European organisations and local authorities. Previously, she worked on disseminating the European Social Agenda to organisations across the UK, and was also the national co-ordinator on the EU-wide Strategy to Combat Social Exclusion.

Ruth Santos joined the **Equal** team in October, and is working on themes A, B, H and I. She holds an MSc in European Social Policy Analysis from Bath University, a postgraduate qualification in finance from the Open University (Spain), and an honours degree in political science and public administration from the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

Ellen Leach supports DPs funded under themes C, D, E and F. She previously worked on the ADAPT Programme. While working on ADAPT, she contributed to good practice papers on supporting entre-

preneurship, learner support and partnership working. Ellen has a degree in geography, and has also worked at a Business Link, where she provided information and advice to small businesses.

Riaz Ravat's specialisms within **Equal** are themes C, D, E and F. He was previously employed by **learndirect** Learner Services as a customer service adviser, where his role was to offer advice and support to learners, learning centres, hubs and Ufi. Riaz has a politics degree, and undertook a number of modules in social policy, looking at social/welfare issues in the UK, Europe and the USA ■

www.worktrain.gov.uk

Job vacancies, training opportunities, career profiles and childcare providers are listed on this site. Users can search for information regarding their locality.

www.dfee.gov.uk/actionteams

Information about the Action Teams for Jobs initiative, which operates in 63 localities across the country with the aim of getting unemployed people back into work.

www.dfee.gov.uk/employmentzones

Information on the Employment Zones initiative, active in 15 areas of Britain, which aims to get long-term unemployed people into work using innovative methods.

www.connexions.gov.uk

Provides up-to-date information about the Connexions Strategy for working with excluded young people.

www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Provides the newsletter 'Disability Now' online. It is published by Scope.

www.disability.gov.uk

This site is hosted by the Disability Unit of the Department for Work and Pensions.

www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu

All publications produced by the Social Exclusion Unit, including the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, can be downloaded from this site.

Publications and websites

In this issue we feature publications and websites particularly relevant to employability. Details have kindly been provided by Ali Kendrick, chair of theme A Thematic Networking Group. In future issues we will have similar features. We would welcome suggestions for items for inclusion.

A key document related to employability is: **'Towards full employment in a modern society'**. This is the Green Paper which sets out the Government's plans for full employment with social justice across the UK.

The Employment Service Research and Development Division carries out research and analysis into Employment Service programmes. Copies of reports and summaries are available from: www.employmentservice.gov.uk/english/about_us/publication_index.asp or the Employment Service, Research Management, Research and Development Division, telephone 0114 259 5655, or e-mail: red.es.rh@gtnet.gov.uk

Scottish Equal Support Unit

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l.lee@objective3.org
Web: www.objective3.org/equalframe.htm

Welsh Equal Support Unit

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