

Seconds away – Equal Round 2 partnerships launched

2005 is our biggest Equal year. We have a second round of Development Partnerships (DPs) starting out, plus we're seeing the fruition of the hard work done in Round 1, writes Ken Lambert.

Over 800 organisations have come together in Round 2 to form 100 DPs across England, Scotland and Wales, doubling the total number involved in **Equal** since 2001. I'm particularly happy to report one statistic for the new round: voluntary and charitable sector-led partnerships now take the largest share of **Equal** funding. This marks the success of our endeavour to widen participation in the ESF through **Equal** and to harness the sector's expertise and grassroots knowledge in developing innovative outcomes for mainstream policy and delivery.

REGIONAL FOCUS

We have also noted a trend towards more regionally focused actions, reflecting the increasingly important agenda represented by the Regional Development Agencies and local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). We will be following suit with greater emphasis on regional publicity and information activities.

The first round of **Equal** DPs are now concluding their activities and focusing on transferring their ideas into the mainstream. Our job over the next year will be to support that process by further publicising the programme and by continuing to bring together those DPs and policy-makers with responsibilities across the eight **Equal** themes.

INFLUENCE

We have already seen **Equal**'s influence on national government departments. Our colleagues at the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) have made extra funding available for the *Create* DP to update national guidance on franchising, using insights gained through **Equal**. They also awarded Bradford College's *JIVE* DP team the contract to run the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology. And the British Refugee Council's *ASSET-UK* DP has gained funding from the national LSC to mainstream its approach to supporting asylum seekers.

The work of **Equal** DPs has also spawned new organisations that have been successful in attracting funding for their services. The *REFLEX* DP has helped to establish the Association of Community-Based Business Advisers (ACBBA), which has impressed the DTI with its ability to reach entrepreneurs in communities that have not traditionally accessed 'mainstream' business support.

So, from regional to national level **Equal** has been leading the way in developing better policy and practice.



Ken Lambert, Deputy Divisional Director in the European Social Fund (ESF) Division

IMPACT

Let's not forget the most important impact – on the people who need the support of the services that **Equal** is helping to improve. I'm proud to report that Nabisah Owadh, who was supported by Birmingham Chamber of Commerce's *BASEC* DP, has won a Barclays Bank-sponsored Handbag.com award for entrepreneurs.

We have a lot to be proud of. And we will continue to shout about it. The second half of 2005 sees the UK's Presidency of the European Union (EU). We will be taking the opportunity to share with colleagues from across all Member States just how much we have achieved through **Equal** ■

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, details on page 8.

Equal in Scotland goes to Europe

The *Equal Access* DP held a successful dissemination event at Scotland House in Brussels in November 2004 as part of its 'Full Employment and Opportunity for All' series of conferences and seminars. The event, entitled 'Inclusive Scotland', explored the following questions:

- Does Scotland have a distinctive contribution to make to the Europe-wide challenge of social and economic exclusion?
- What lessons can be drawn from our work to date?
- How can we contribute to the development of European policy?

The speakers included Kay Barton, Head of Inclusion at the Scottish Executive, and Marie Donnelly, then Head of Unit at Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs. The audience ranged from the DPs' domestic and transnational partners to representatives from the European Commission (EC). The presentations from the event can be accessed at:

www.social-justice.net/equalaccess/November.html



News round-up

Our regular round-up of news from the GB Equal programmes.

Development Partnerships from the first round are well into delivery of their work programmes and are making significant inroads into informing current policy and practice. Partnerships working to promote business start-up to disadvantaged and under-represented groups joined together to contribute to the 'Enterprise Insight' conference in November 2004. This national event marked the start of Enterprise Week, designed to inform and encourage enterprise among young people. For all the news on Enterprise Week, go to: www.starttalkingideas.org

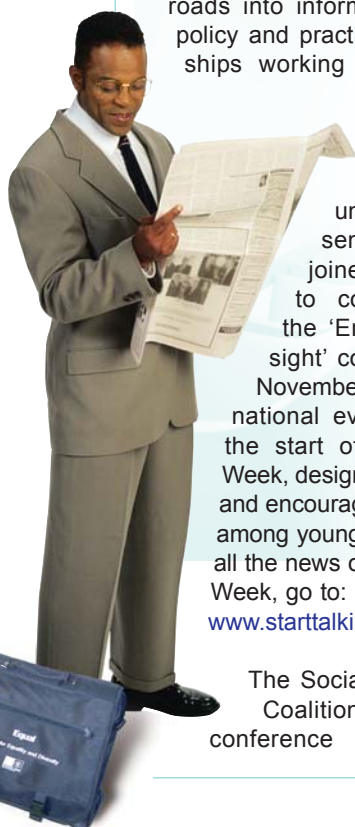
The Social Enterprise Coalition's national conference in January

2005 also provided a platform for **Equal** DPs. This sell-out conference was a major success, with over 800 delegates, high-profile exhibitors and a formidable platform of over 60 speakers from industry and government, including the Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP, Nigel Griffiths MP, Minister for Social Enterprise, and John Healy MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Development Partnerships working to strengthen the social economy, including *EQUIPE*, *NESEP*, *SEEM* and *SEP* all showcased their work. More information is available at: www.socialenterprise.org.uk/default.aspx

All the Round 2 DPs, which were awarded funding in September 2004, are now busy developing their domestic and transnational partnerships. To help with finding transnational partners, the UK hosted a transnational conference, 'Building an **Equal** Europe', on 11 and

12 January. This event was attended by representatives from the European Commission, 23 other Member States and DPs from both rounds of **Equal**. Development Partnerships were able to learn from those with previous experience of transnational working, as well as finding out more about **Equal**, policy priorities and the selected DPs in each of the Member States represented. For the conference proceedings and the EC guide to transnational working, see the **Equal** website (www.equal.ecotec.co.uk).

Scottish DPs are particularly keen to work with partners from the new Member States, and would be pleased to hear from any DPs who would like to work with Scottish partners. Further information on DPs from both Rounds 1 and 2, including contact details, can be found at: www.objective3.org/equal



Shape of the future

A hundred new Development Partnerships across Great Britain were selected in September 2004. In this article, the GB Equal Support Unit team surveys the new trends emerging in the second round of Equal.

Equal retains its familiar feel in Round 2. The four 'pillars' of the European Employment Strategy – Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equal Opportunities – still form the basis of the structure. While the definitions of the themes remain the same, it is clear that the agenda is moving on. This shift is best reflected by looking in detail at the kind of work DPs will be doing for the next three years.

EMPLOYABILITY

Development Partnerships looking at employability issues can be categorised according to a number of main areas of work and their geographical reach. There is a trend toward more local and regional area-focused initiatives, supporting people involved in the custodial system, and help for specific target groups and communities.

Local and regional initiatives

Many DPs are directing their resources to specific regional and local areas. The *Thresholds* DP aims to develop a community centre in Tower Hamlets – one of the most deprived local authority areas in the country – into a test bed for a range of innovative employment support measures to help local people to gain skills, qualifications and jobs.

The *Arts Participation for Employability (APE)* DP will work sub-regionally across Coventry and Warwickshire. *APE* will use participative arts such as drama to develop a range of training and support to help people to access and remain in employment.

Supporting people in the custodial system

Six DPs will be developing programmes to address offending behaviour and improve the skills of juvenile and adult prisoners. Their aim is to prevent re-offending. The *EXODUS* DP will pilot a range of targeted interventions with short-term prisoners and priority offenders to enhance their employability and resettlement prospects.

The *ASCEND* DP will support offenders from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in participating prisons. These are people who face disproportionately high levels of discrimination and exclusion from the labour market. *ASCEND* will work directly with employers, communities and the target group to combat racism and test solutions to improve education, training and employment.

“The trend is toward local and regional action”

Help for particular groups and communities

A number of DPs are working with specific groups and communities, including people with disabilities, people living with HIV, carers, refugees and BME groups. These partnerships draw on a wide range of organ-

isations to combat discrimination and disadvantage in education, training and employment.

The *VISAGE* DP is tackling labour-market inequalities and discrimination faced by blind and partially-sighted people. It aims to move people from sheltered and supported employment to a higher level of 'open' employment. The *CREATE* DP will develop a systematic approach to tackle labour-market inequality and discrimination against ethnic minorities. *CREATE* will develop and test a web-based interactive model of diversity management for employers, while supporting beneficiaries to access training and employment opportunities.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

In the entrepreneurship field, DPs are working to promote business start-ups for under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Their work complements the national policy priorities of the Small Business Service, particularly around building an enterprise culture, improving access to finance and encouraging more enterprise in disadvantaged communities.

A wide range of organisations are involved in piloting new approaches to business start-up, including higher education institutions, local authorities, mainstream business support organisations, private-sector companies, a sector skills council and the Prison Service. Within the partnerships there is

strong representation from target-group and intermediary organisations, including ACBBA, the Association of Community-Based Business Advisers set up during the first round of **Equal**.

Among the innovations are the *Supporting Inclusion in Enterprise Development* DP's pilot of culturally appropriate forms of micro-credit for excluded communities; its enterprise development materials in languages other than English; and new models for quality assurance and accreditation of community-based enterprise support services.

The *Trading Up* DP will extend the well-established Young Enterprise model, a group business-simulation model for use by people from disadvantaged communities. The *Changing Directions* DP, led by the Prison Service, is developing and piloting enterprise training programmes for ex-offenders, to include intensive community-based support and provision.

The entrepreneurship pillar also supports activities to help social enterprise to contribute to the fight against discrimination. Eight DPs have been selected in England.

“Equal supports social enterprise to fight against discrimination”

Many of the DPs have linked their proposed work with national social enterprise policy or regional social enterprise strategies. Three DPs will focus on creating an enabling environment for the social enterprise sector. The *Cultural Shift South East* and *REALISE* DPs will develop partnerships between public authorities and social enterprise, to strengthen the sector and develop inclusive employment models. The *Best Procurement* DP will focus particularly on increasing the conversion rate between public expenditure

and labour-market equality within the East Midlands.

The *INSPIRE* DP is focusing on making social enterprises better business-ess, by providing targeted research and development support. The C3 DP supports social economy business-advice organisations to build performance improvement and quality-management approaches into their work.

Other DPs are focusing on developing the social enterprise sector within their local area. This includes empowering local communities to manage their town or district centres as sustainable social enterprises.



Adaptability

Development Partnerships in the adaptability field are developing ways to promote lifelong learning, basic skills and the work-life balance. Their work focuses on ways of improving employment prospects by involving people in learning and working with employers on adapting to change. This includes flexible work practices and using information technology.

The second round of **Equal** has a new focus on older workers. A number of DPs are looking at issues relating to older workers or are supporting older people as part of a wider project. The *South West Forum on Age and*

Employability DP will help older people to improve their employability, while supporting employers to act positively in employing and supporting them. The *Prime Advantage* DP will empower older workers by supporting better age management in small and medium-sized enterprises and industry.

The *Cement* DP will take forward work done in the first round of **Equal** to expand opportunities for older people and other groups to access the construction industry.

In other areas, the *London Workforce Futures* DP will ad-

dress issues affecting employers and the workforce in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act. The *Inclusion through Media* DP will use the experience of creating media as a catalyst to empower individuals and communities.

“A new focus on older workers”

Some statistics

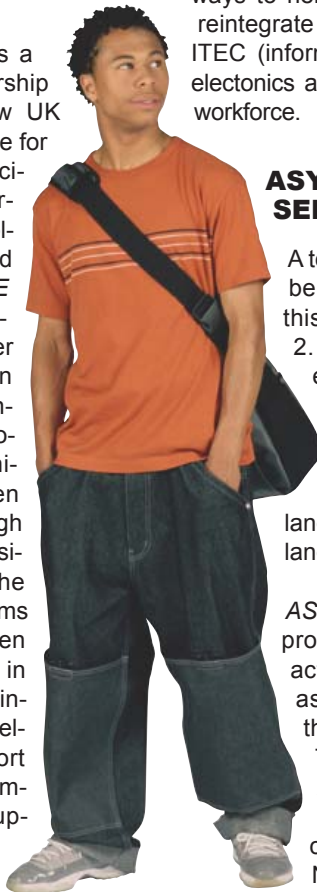
Of the 100 DPs selected:

<p>37</p> <p>37 make up the Employability pillar (themes A and B)</p>	<p>28</p> <p>28 new partnerships are supporting the Adaptability pillar (themes E and F)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>four are helping the integration of asylum seekers (theme I)</p>
<p>25</p> <p>25 constitute the Entrepreneurship pillar in GB (themes C and D)</p>	<p>7</p> <p>seven are focusing on Equal Opportunities (theme H)</p>	<p>72</p> <p>72 are UK-wide or English DPs. In Scotland, 11 DPs have been approved and in Wales there are 17 new DPs.</p>

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The four DPs in this pillar are tackling occupational segregation by supporting women into jobs and sectors in which they are traditionally under-represented.

The *JIVE* DP is a national partnership led by the new UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology, at Bradford College. *JIVE* aims to overcome gender segregation in these target industries and provide opportunities for women returners through initiatives for positive action. The *Agender* DP aims to help women into careers in non-traditional industries by developing support centres that combine family support with advice on jobs. A



Women Building Futures comprises cross-sectoral organisations and beneficiaries forming a unique partnership to access employment sectors in which women are currently under-represented. The *Advancing Women* DP will pilot innovative ways to help to integrate and reintegrate women into the ITEC (information technology, electronics and communication) workforce.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

A total of four DPs are being funded under this theme in Round 2. Partnerships are either local or regional in their approach. Three DPs will run their programmes in England and one in Scotland.

ASPIRE is looking at providing a range of activities to support asylum seekers in the West Midlands.

The *Empowering Asylum Seekers to Integrate* DP focuses mainly on National Asylum

Support Service dispersal areas, especially within London. The *Haringey Aspire* DP operates in the London Borough of Haringey.

All the DPs propose to develop a variety of activities, including volunteering opportunities for asylum seekers; accreditation methods in a diverse range of courses; new tools for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) and skills audits; capacity-building for voluntary organisations; ways to address emerging issues such as trafficking of women and HIV-positive asylum seekers; and new frameworks for dissemination, which will enable asylum seekers to undertake awareness-raising activities themselves ■

“DPs address emerging issues like trafficking of women”

The twin set

Equal brings together project partnerships from across Europe. The ministries and agencies that administer the programme on behalf of their countries also link up through a 'twinning' programme. Karl Held went to meet three of GB's Resident Twinning Advisers (RTAs).



John Skinner has been in Prague in the Czech Republic with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs since August 2003. Previously he worked at the ESF Division at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in England.

John is enjoying Prague: "It's a pretty, compact city and I wish we had proper trams in London. I'll miss them so." Communication hasn't been an issue. Asked how he copes with the language, he replies: "Perfectly. Most people in Prague speak very good English. And for those that don't I have an excellent assistant who translates for me". When pressed on his favourite aspects of living in one of the newest Member States, he headed straight for the bar: "Apparently, the Czechs brew a decent drop of beer".

FROM PRAGUE TO BRATISLAVA...

Rod Gilchrist was instrumental in developing **Equal** in Great Britain during 2000-1. Since April 2004, he's been based in Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family. Rod has also really taken to his temporary home, a small capital of around 500,000 people. Its historic old town has many fine buildings.

Bratislava is less developed and cosmopolitan than Prague, but designer shopping and out-of-town malls are testimony to its comparative wealth and low unemployment. Further east to-

wards the Ukraine, however, unemployment is higher and the rest of Slovakia is an EU Objective 1 area.

What about the food? "Very different from the UK. There's no convenience food or ready meals and little for vegetarians. Dough dumplings are popular, served with pork or chicken, or with fruit and cream as a sweet".

...AND BACK NORTH TO WARSAW

Nigel Tubman is the RTA in the Polish capital, working with the

Ministry of Economy and Labour. He's used his experience of GB ESF and other central European countries, gained in Lithuania and the Czech Republic, to help his Polish colleagues to manage the complications of implementing ESF in the Objective 1 and **Equal** programmes. Nigel has thrown himself into the language and culture of the two-million strong metropolis of Warsaw, and enjoys the pavement café lifestyle of summer.



Find out more

The GB **Equal** Support Unit can pass on your enquiries to the RTAs. We can also help with most other transnational questions. E-mail us at equal@ecotec.co.uk or phone 0121 616 3660. You can also find out about individual DPs on the European Commission's database of **Equal** partnerships at:

<https://equal.cec.eu.int/equal/jsp/index.jsp?lang=en>



...AND SO TO BUSINESS

But what about the business of being an RTA? What are the main challenges their hosts face? And how have the advisers been able to help?

Nigel's comment sums it up: "Our colleagues are managing all the complications of implementing ESF with very young, very enthusiastic but naturally very inexperienced teams." Rod agrees that the main benefit that RTAs can provide is the experience of practical planning for ESF programmes. However, timing is crucial, as is an understanding approach to the rigours of different bureaucracies: "In some areas we have succeeded, but in others decisions had been made before we got here. Financial flows, for example, have been a real issue," says John.

Rod is keen to emphasise that their hands-on approach has reaped rewards: "I've helped to publicise the programme in all regions, to develop guidance, application and evaluation processes, supported potential DPs and trained colleagues in the Ministry." It's the only way when the challenge is to launch **Equal** in two months and start DPs within nine months.

MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE

When we asked about building working relationships, our twinned were keen to show how their experience can help **Equal** DPs looking for partners in the new Member States. "You have to understand the difference in organisational and working culture," says John. "Partnership approaches are a little shaky and administrative systems aren't made as easy for projects as they should be. National law plays a much greater role in shaping administrative systems than in the UK." Nigel agrees: "decision-making here takes place at much higher levels than in the UK".

Rod picks up another theme: "Colleagues here find planning together a challenge. They often work in single offices, with the radio on. It can be difficult to break into their world. I try to show that I can make their jobs easier and provide benefits. I meet them informally and keep an open door, so that I know what's going on. The best way to learn more – and help more – is to join the grapevine and be seen as part of the team."

PERFECT PARTNERS

Slovakia will have up to 101 **Equal** DPs. The focus will broadly be on assisting disadvantaged groups such as the

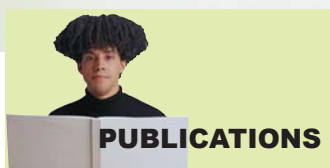
Roma community, women returners, older and disabled people and others. Rod believes that Slovak DPs will be keen to develop links with and share good practice from different cultures.

In the Czech Republic, 59 DPs across all nine **Equal** themes have been selected. Again, these are looking for open sharing of ideas and approaches, supported by co-financing from the Ministry and advance payments to get them started.

In Poland, 107 DPs have been approved. Their focus is on employability and equal opportunities, with emphasis on the opportunity to share with and learn from other Member States. The National Support Unit has been very active in helping partnerships to overcome project and financial management challenges through seminars and consultations.

Rod's final word on partnerships with the new Member States: "Colleagues here are keen to work with British partnerships and the people are very friendly. The pace of change in these countries is increasing. It is through the kind of direct collaboration that **Equal** offers – partner to partner – that countries like this will truly take their place in Europe." ■

Publications websites events



DWP Five-year Strategy: Opportunity and Security Throughout Life

Sets the aspiration of increasing overall employment by tackling inactivity, while still supporting those who are unable to work. Available at:

www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/5_yr_strat/pdf/report.pdf

The first **Progress Report of the Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force**, which delivers the Government's cross-Whitehall minority ethnic employment strategy, is available at:

www.emetaskforce.gov.uk/pdf/EMETF.pdf

Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society

The Government's strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion is available at:

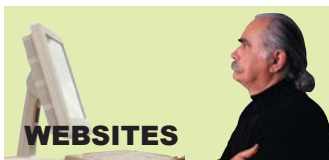
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/race_improving_opport.pdf

Scottish Equal Support Unit

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Welsh Equal Support Unit

Contact: Michelle Howarth • The **Equal Team** • Welsh European Funding Office • The Old Primary School • Machynlleth • Wales • SY20 8PE • Tel: 01654 704 900 • E-mail: equal@wales.gsi.gov.uk • Web: www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/newprogs/equal



Age discrimination

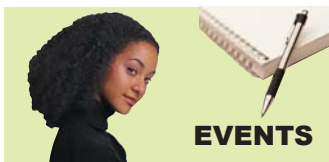
In advance of age discrimination legislation, the DWP has commissioned research with the Age Partnership Group. Find out more at:

www.agepositive.gov.uk/newsDetail.cfm?sectionid=44&newsid=514

Forthcoming Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) consultations

1. Better service delivery for disadvantaged people who move frequently
2. Young adults with troubled lives
3. Excluded older people
4. Improving service delivery for disadvantaged adults
5. Inclusion through innovation – tackling social exclusion through new technologies

For updates on these consultations, visit the SEU website at: www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/



Enterprise, Inclusion and Equality: The Role of Local Authorities (7 April 2005)

This *REFLEX* DP event will look at how local authorities and the community/voluntary sector can encourage enterprise support services to meet the needs of entrepreneurs from minority ethnic communities. Contact Gill Roth by phone on 020 7635 0520 or by e-mail at gillr@prevista.co.uk

Handbag winner

Nabisah Owadh, a woman entrepreneur supported by Birmingham and Solihull Chamber of Commerce's *BASEC* DP, has won a Handbag.com award for best business plan in her category.

Nabisah, a qualified teacher of adult education, had always dreamed of starting her own training academy. After attending a number of enterprise centres, Nabisah arrived at the *BASEC* DP's WISE project where she completed her business plan and through sheer determination and hard work acquired a training contract from a local college. She now runs her 2nd City Academy (www.2ndcityacademy.co.uk) with 60 classes a day at two different centres and is preparing to launch an Internet café.

Nabisah submitted her business plan to the women's website www.handbag.com which holds an annual national competition sponsored by Barclays Bank for the best business plans in defined categories. In the face of stiff competition, Nabisah was shortlisted for the final in London in October 2004. She won her category, and her business will benefit from the generous prize of promotional and business advice.

"The WISE project is run by self-employed women for women who want to become self-employed," commented Anne Simper, WISE project manager. "We work with each woman to educate and advise her how to identify her business objectives, analyse the marketplace and acquire the necessary client base and funding to make her business a success."

"All of our women have different starting points and our aim is to empower them to run successful enterprises," added Anabela Ferreira, WISE project co-ordinator ■



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