

EQUAL Initiative

Transnational meeting of the Transnational Partnership

“SHARE”

Paola (Calabria, ITALY), July 2005

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1. The context

The EQUAL Initiative is promoted by the European Commission under the framework of the European Social Fund policies. As an EC initiative, its main goal is to provide new models and insights to managing authorities in order to innovate and improve the national systems in the field of social and job insertion of disadvantaged groups. Within the Equal scheme, projects are awarded to Development Partnership (DPs) on a national basis, but these DPs have to collaborate with DPS of other Member States in order to ensure an european added value to the projects.

The workshop in Paola (Calabria, Italy) has been planned and carried out by the transnational partnership "Share".

The DPs participating in it are the followings:

- P.A.O.L.A. – Prassi Avanzate per l'Occupazione ed il Lavoro Associato (Italy),
- AMETHIS - EMPLOI DE TH EN FIN DE CARRIERE (France),
- Tyfloemploy (Czech Republic),
- Employment of Deaf & Hard of hearing Persons (Lithuania),
- FAME Formation Adaptation Maintien Employabilité (Belgium, fr & de),
- Positive Changes for Disabled People with mobility empairment (Latvia).

The common topic of the Transnational Partnership (TP) is the improvement of employability, self employment, job retention and reintegration of disabled people in the labour market. However, differences exist on some aspects of the interventions (e.g. beneficiaries, solutions etc.). An overview of the national projects is presented in Table 2.

Partners signed in March 2005 a transnational cooperation agreement (TCA) concerning the main themes of cooperation and the main products of it. In this document, it was agreed that the first transnational meeting will take place in Paola (Calabria, Italy) in July 2005 with the aim of defining more in details the future common workplan of the TP.

As for the working methodology in the meeting, the partnership decided to hire the services of a professional, neutral facilitator (Federico Bussi), so to make the work sessions of the seminar more productive and effective and to ensure the creation of a team spirit among participants. The facilitator used visualisation techniques (coloured cards, flip over sheets etc.) in order to keep track of the group work. For a better understanding of this report, please take into account that all the tables here presented are the result of a groupwork where these techniques were applied.

2. Introductory session

The workshop was attended by:

Luigi Ciccarelli, P.A.O.L.A. (I),
Rosanna Minniti, P.A.O.L.A. (I),
Daniela Valente, P.A.O.L.A. (I),
Axel Weynendaele, FAME (B),
Nathalie Vanderneipen, FAME (B),
Jiri Kocanek, Tyfloemploy (CZ),
Max Techer, AMETHIS (FR),
Fabienne Montoya (FR)
Ieva Bike, Positive Changes for Disabled People (LV),
Elina Lenerte, Positive Changes for Disabled People (LV),
Daiga Daozite, Positive Changes for Disabled People (LV),
Wilma Semenaite-Gych, Employment of Deaf & Hard of hearing Persons (LT),
Jurgita Kuprote, Employment of Deaf & Hard of hearing Persons (LT),
Valdereza Svetikiene, Employment of Deaf & Hard of hearing Persons (LT),

The facilitator of the workshop was Federico Bussi.

In the introductory session (Tuesday July 5th 2005), participants introduced themselves and expressed their expectations about the workshop. Here is the list of them:

- to know methods for helping disabled people to insert in the labour market
- to know each other better (1st round project)
- to plan transnational actions of this project
- to know legislation on disability of other countries
- planning transnational meetings, products (outcomes), monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system
- everything goes well
- get information on social matters and disability
- to know situations of other countries
- to know new methods and practices on disability
- to know experiences & to plan transnational meetings (products, logistics)
- to exchange info, ideas etc.
- to know new ideas, methods, practices etc.
- plan meetings (esp. that in Belgium)

The majority of these expectations were in line with the objective that the partners had agreed in the TCA, which were the following:

- share a common vision of the transnational component of the project,
- define in details the organisation of the forthcoming meetings
- share ideas on some technical aspects related to the project theme
- create a collaborative spirit among the TC

Then the facilitator presented briefly the agenda of the whole meeting, that read as follows:

Tuesday July 5	Wednesday July 6	Thursday July 7
Introductory session The aims of the TC <i>(brainstorming session)</i> Overview of national projects	<i>(follows)</i> Planning the next meeting in La Reunion (FR)	Presentation on Social Capital by Italian expert Prof. Stefano Bertoldi Administrative issues
<i>Lunch break</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>
<i>(follows)</i> Overview of national projects Planning the next meeting in La Reunion	Planning the meeting in Charleroi (B)	Presentation on M&E sistem and tools by Italian expert Salvatore Diacono Final evaluation

3. Sharing a common view of the transnational cooperation

In this session participants expressed their vision about the final aim of the transnational collaboration. The purpose of this work was to create a common understanding and a common vision of what transnational actually meant for the people involved.

As far as the working method is concerned, the facilitator asked the group “What do we want to get, to achieve through the transnational partnership?”. Participants then wrote down their responses on card, which were then explained and grouped into similar categories. The overall result of the exercise is shown in Table 1.

The results of this group work showed that the aims of the partershop refer to the following five dimensions:

- **the improvement of the “image” of disabled paole**, both among dosabled themselves and employers: partners believe that one of the major constraints when inserting disabled people into labour market is the cultural “stigma” that disabled people bring about with them; people in general and employers tend to think that disabled people will not meet productivity standards and that they will create problems in their insertion in the working environment (relationships with colleagues etc.); one of the objectives of the SHARE partnership is to validate common products, tools and approaches so as to promote a new and ‘positive’ image of the disabled in the labour world; to this regard, one of the concrete outcome of the transnational partnership will be the production of a video aiming at increasing public awareness on the potentialities of disabled people at work;
- **new methods**; this other aim of the TP concerns the exchange of tools, methods and ideas for promoting the job insertion of disabled people; the transnational collaboration should provide to partners new ideas in order to improve the effectiveness of national projects when inserting disabled people in the work environment;
- **exchange of information**; this dimension of the transnational collaboration is related to the continuous exchange of information that partners will go thotugh all along the project; getting information on how other Member States deal with the subject of the project may help the reflections and the capacity of partners to propose innovative measure in their own countries;
- **self entrepreneurship**; some of the Equal projects involved in the “Share” TP aims at enabling disabled people to start their own business as entrepreneurs; this is particulary pursued in those contexts where the demand of labour force by enterprises is low (Italy, e.g.);
- **personal involvement**; the aims of the TP do not only refer to the quality and effectiveness of projects but also to the capacity of the project to stimulate and motivate the practitionners and officers who will actually work

in it; professional grow and personal enrichment were quoted as fundamental goals for many of the partners.

This groupwork was very useful in the sense that partners shared on an equal basis their views about the transnational collaboration and recognised themselves in the final outcome.

4. Overview of national projects

In this session, participants had the chance to get to a real understanding of the national projects taking part in the “Share” transnational partnership.

The facilitator invited every partner to express in a synthetic way the main elements of the project. Those elements were: project title or acronym, the target group(s), main problems and obstacles the project intends to tackle, the solutions or tools envisaged. The complete overview of this work is presented in Table 2.

This technique allowed participants to get quick, clear and sufficient information about the logic of intervention of every EQUAL project at a national level.

5. The action plan of the transnational collaboration

First of all, in this session the group clarified the timeframe of the next transnational meetings, which reads as follows:

- LA REUNION (Fr) in December 2005 (this meeting will be preceded by a bilateral meeting between the Italian and the French partners in October 2005),
- CHARLEROI (B) in February 2006,
- Short visit of French beneficiaries to Italy, Czech Rep. or Lithuania in Sept-Oct 2006,
- PRAGUE (CZ) in April 2007,
- FINAL MEETING IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA in October 2007.

Then, partners checked all the transnational products which were agreed in the TCA and defined more detailed actions in order to carry out the whole plan. The result of this work is shown in Table 3.

As far as the **pilot research on Social capital** is concerned, the Italian partner will be the responsible for such an action. This research intends to explore a new approach to disability, by which one of the assets of the disabled people is their network of relations and contacts within their social environment. Thus, the research aims at measuring the intensity and the reliability of this network among final beneficiaries. It assumes that this network may improve the capacity of disabled people to insert them into the social and labour world. The Italian partner invited an expert to present a brief outline of the Social Capital approach (this happened on Thursday morning).

On the operational side, the working plan establishes that the Italian partner will send a draft version of the questionnaire to the other partners before the meeting in La Réunion and that in this meeting the tool will be discussed and finally approved.

As for the **joint report on national projects**, the group decided to change a little bit the focus and the nature of this product. Instead of the mere overview of each Equal project (which is, according to the group, already available in official documents such as compendium etc.), partners found more useful a document in which 6 key-issues regarding the subject of the project were discussed and analysed. In this way the TP could produce more added-value to the discussion on crucial issues, so enriching the debate both at national and european scale. The Belgian partner volunteered for being the responsible for such an action. The working plan established that each partner will propose one key-issues before the meeting in La Réunion and that the Belgian partner will present a first list of key-issues to be discussed and analysed in the next meeting.

Regarding the **communication tools**, the partners decided to produce a leaflet, which will briefly explain the national projects and will present a common logo of the TP. The product will also be available on CD-ROM. The responsible for this will be the Latvian partner. All partners are invited to send contribution and ideas to the partner responsible, who will present a first sketch in La Réunion meeting.

As far as the **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system** is concerned, partners clarified that the evaluation exercise will concern the transnational dimension, due to the fact that the evaluation of national project will already be carried out by partners within their own Equal national projects. They agreed that a first version of the system and of the actual tools will be presented and discussed in La Reunion meeting. A draft version of the report will have to be completed so to be presented and discussed in the Latvia meeting (Oct 2007).

Another product is a document presenting **recommendations** to decision-makers both at national and EU level with respect to the themes dealt with in the TP. The Italian and the French partners will be the responsible for such an action. A draft version of it will be presented in the La Réunion and a revised version will be discussed and approved in the Prague meeting (April 2007).

The sixth common product is a **compilation (compendium) of all the tools** used and tested in the projects. The Czech partner will take care of it. Partners decided that they will send information on this to the Czech partner by February 2007 so that the final version of the product may be discussed in the Prague meeting.

The seventh product is the production of a **video**, whose aim is the improving of the image of the disabled people in society and especially in the labour world. Partners will send ideas and suggestions to the responsible partner (Latvia), who will present a feasibility plan in La Réunion meeting. The idea is to show on video the experiences carried out by Equal projects involved in the "Share" TP and to raise the awareness of general public, decision makers and entrepreneurs about the potentialities of disabled people in working environments.

6. The next meeting in La Réunion (FR)

The French partner presented a very detailed agenda for the meeting in La Réunion. This proposal was the following:

LA REUNION MEETING

From 5 to 9 December 2005

Participants arrive on Sat Dec 3rd

Flight cost: around 1,000 Euro (From Paris, also possible via Mauritius)

Accommodation: 103 €/night incl. Breakfast

TENTATIVE AGENDA:

MONDAY

Visit to the social and economic life of La Réunion

TUESDAY - WEDNESDAY

Discussion on the theme "Measures of accompanying disabled people into labour world"

THURSDAY

Bilateral meetings with experts on specific subjects

Afternoon: Conference on policies

FRIDAY

Visits to companies which have employed disabled people

With respect to this initial proposal, the group realised that the discussion of the on-going work on common products should be also carried out during the seminar. These were the additional subjects to be treated in the La Réunion meeting:

- Presentation on "Aid legislation" in France and Italy
- Clarification on the questionnaire of the research on the "Social capital"
- Discussion on the feasibility project of the video
- Updates on national projects
- Definition of the key-issues (see product nr. 2 Table 3)
- Presentation and discussion of leaflet
- Final approval of M&E system and tools
- Discussion of the draft version of the recommendations

Partners estimated that one full day should be devoted to these topics. The French partner committed to take this recommendation into account when defining the definite agenda (tentatively this could be done on Tuesday and/or Friday).

Then the group defined a detailed and short-termed action plan so te prepare the meeting in La Reunion. It is shown in Table 4.

This gave the group a concrete idea on deliverable to be produced and the respective deadlines.

7. The meeting in Charleroi (B)

The meeting in Charleroi (Belgium) will take place from Monday 13 to Friday 17 February 2005. The accommodation will cost around euro 73 per night, breakfast included.

The Belgian partner presented the following tentative agenda:

MONDAY

Presentation of the transnational network, of local agencies, legislation. Debriefing.

TUESDAY - WEDNESDAY

On-site visits to companies. Debriefing

THURSDAY

Presentation of awareness raising tools and of management tools

FRIDAY

Preparation of the next meeting (CZ)

Check of the transnational products

Partners agreed on about this initial proposal.

8. Final evaluation of the meeting

In the final session of the meeting, participants expressed their opinions about the whole seminar. They first indicated the things that “could have been better” and consequently those things which “they like the most”.

This is the list of the aspects which “could have been better”:

- Lack of participation of some partners
- Lack of capacity to work in English
- Music in the hotel too loud and until late hours
- Scarce productivity of the group work
- Materials for the meeting not well prepared
- Too much pasta in the menu
- Restaurant service too slow
- Scarce respect of timetable
- Too formal attitude
- Few social events

These are the aspects which participants found highly satisfactory:

- Competence of partners on the project's subject
- Good working methodology
- Residentiality of the seminar
- Italian hospitality
- Location
- Concrete planning of next meeting
- Hotel facilities
- Smiley Italians
- Good atmosphere in the meeting
- Working style of the facilitator
- Better idea on what each partner is going to do
- Things and plans become more clear
- Good food
- International atmosphere
- The Social capital approach
- Informal contacts with partners during breaks, free time etc.

Table 1. The common view of the transnational partnership

“Image of disabled people”	New methods	Exchange of information	Self entrepreneurship	Personal involvement
To know communication methods in each country to make sensitive people about disable	Establishment of a local organization aimed at connecting enterprises + disability	In the result of meetings in Paola I’ll better understand Italian tax policy for disabled people	More disabled people with an entrepreneurial “feeling”	Grow and personal enrichment. I think that from any relationship new ideas and opportunity will rise
Better international and national integration of the disabled people to change image of disabled people	Impuls for new ideas, new projects...	About the employment of disabled people in Paola	Cultural development; cancelling discrimination; training with reference to social enterprise, which can be competitive and able to raise capital	Hope for a better future as independent person without barriers
Tools for motivation of disabled & tools for motivation of employers	Achieve a holistic vision of activities within the Equal project so as to detect new tools and means within a long-lasting collaboration	I’ll better understand the status of disabled people in society in other countries		
Common video & summary of results of national projects	Create a network with the international partners in order to exchange operative projects	To get experiences in working from handicap people		
Create new tool to make aware society to disable people discover “handicap’s network” of each partner	Obtain new methods for the professional integration of the disabled			

Table 2. Overview of national products

Project	Target group(s)	Problems / obstacles	Solution / tools
FAME – Training Adaptation maintain Employability B	Trade Unions Employers companies Social economic sector Public organisations Temporary work agencies	Economic situation Stereotypes related to employers, disabled people, social workers	“Contact” hypothesis Comedia dell’arte Management tools Awareness campaign
P.A.O.L.A. Prassi Avanzate per l’Occupazione e il Lavoro Associato I	Physical disabled from birth or later acquired	Social stigma Lack of self esteem Lack of supporting agencies	Communication towards social key actors Integrated set of tools (selection, support, training etc.) Institutional/ systemic building
Employment of deaf & hard of hearing persons LT	Deaf & hard of hearing	Low motivation of disabled (long lasting unemployment, high pensions from State) Negative attitude / lack of info for employers Not effective empl. System No public awareness raising campaigns	Seminars for deaf Seminars for employers Employment & consultation service
AMETHIS FR	Personnes handicapées de + de 45 ans Effectif: 30 personnes	Age Erosion des compétences Faible niveau de formation Difficultés psychosociales Taux de chômage important	Accompagnement personnalisé pour soutenir l’action individuelle: recherche d’emploi, la promotion de la compétence Immersion dans l’entreprise Accompagnement, conseiller les entreprises
Positive changes for disabled people (with mobility impairment) LV	People with mobility impairment (mainly in wheelchair) about 7000 people in Latvia	In Latvia there is no data or statistics Not adopted environment Non friendly tax policy for employers	Creation of statistical basis Research (questionnaire): how does person with mobility impairment feel; how does “healthy” people feel in Latvia (social sphere) Collaboration with leading experts To give an impuls for changes in tax policy
Tyflooemployability CZ	Blind and partially-sighted people	High unemployment rate Low education of target group Low motivation of blind people Lack of information of employers and clients	Research “Labor market analysis” Work assistance “pilot attestation” Education of visually impaired people Cooperation with the empl.

Table 3. The outcomes of the transnational collaboration: action plan

Product	Partner responsible	Working process	Tangible outcomes	Deadline
1. Pilot research on "Social capital"	PAOLA (I)	Form sent to partners to be filled w/ disabled people	Report	June 2006 Questionnaire to be sent before La Reunion meeting
2. Joint report on national projects	FAME (B)	Common structure (6 key issues) established and sent to partners	Report	Indication of one key-issue by every partner before Dec 2005
3. Communication tools (LEAFLET incl. Logo + CD of the TP)	Positive changes for disabled people (LV)	Partners send ideas then Latvia sends sketch	Leaflet w/ logo, CD	First sketch presented in La Reunion
4. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) report	Lithuania w/ help of I and B	Draft tools to be presented in La Reunion	Evaluation tools + report	Proposals by Fame sent before La Reunion meeting. Tools approved in La Réunion. Draft version of the report to be discussed in meetings in LT-LV
5. Recommendations	PAOLA (I) and AMETHIS (FR)	Initial proposal by FR & I	Written document	Draft version to be discussed in La Reunion. 2 nd edition finally approved in Prague meeting
6. Compilation of tools	Tyfloemploy (CZ)	Partners send info to CZ	Document	Partners send info to CZ by Feb 2007. Final version discussed in the CZ meeting
7. VIDEO	Latvia	Ideas and suggestions sent to LV; LV prepares proposal	Video	Ideas and suggestions sent by Sept 2005. Feasibility study to be discussed in La Reunion

Table 4. Short-term action plan for the preparation of the La Réunion meeting

Task	Partner responsible	Deadline
Partners send postal address, name and functions of the person signing the TCA	All to Lithuania	AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
Ideas and suggestions on the video sent to Latvia	All	Sept 2005
All partners sent to Latvia logo and brief description of national projects	All	Mid Sept 2005
Sending survey design on "Social capital"	PAOLA (I)	Mid Nov 2005
Indication to Belgian partner key-issues of product n. 2	All partners coordination FAME (B)	Mid Nov 2005
Latvia sends draft version of the leaflet	LATVIA	Mid Nov 2005
Lithuania, Belgium and Italy send consistent proposal on M&E	Lithuania, Belgium and Italy	Mid Nov 2005
FR & I prepare a draft version of the recommendations	FR & I	To be presented in the meeting itself
Partners send material to Lithuania to produce the CV on the "Share" TP	Lithuania as coordinator	