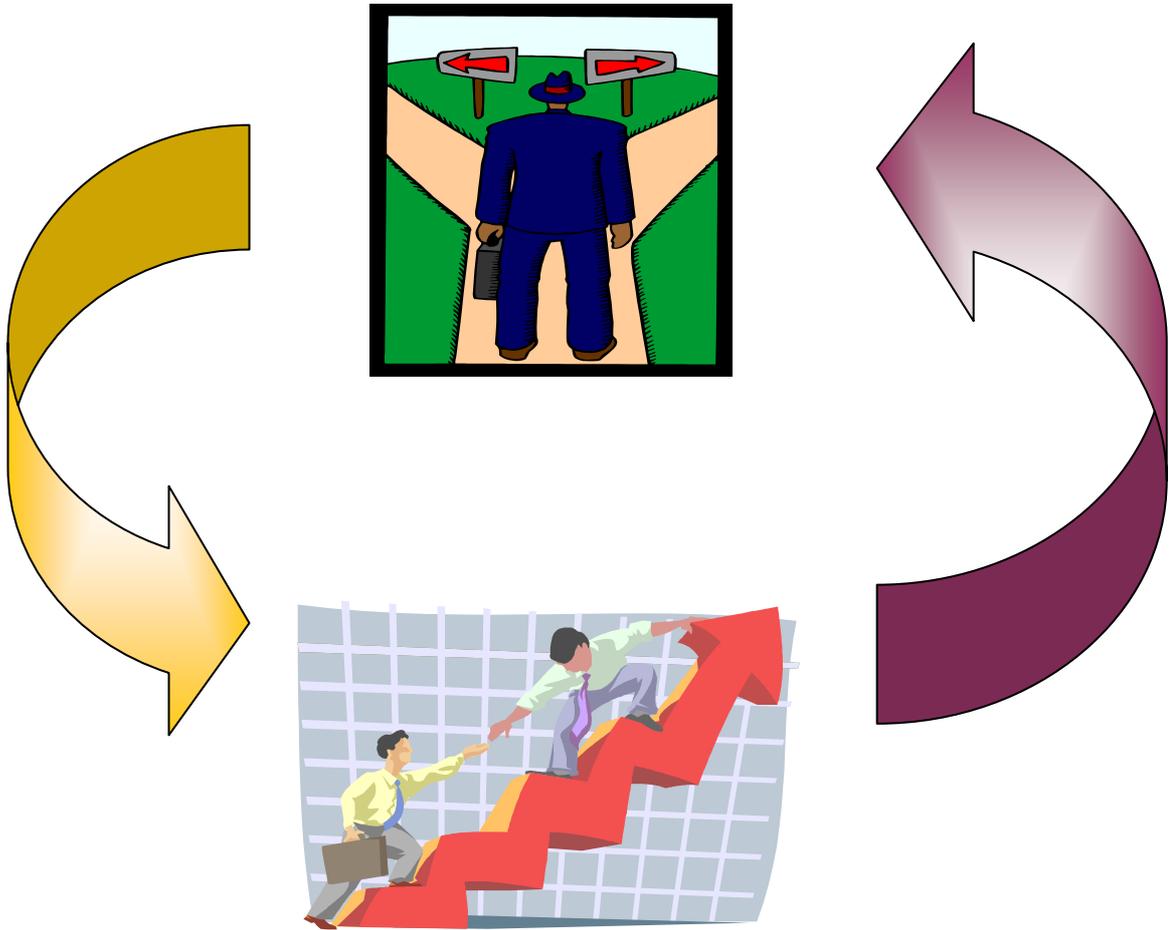


THE EQUAL AT WORK PROJECT



ANNUAL REPORT 2002



Equal at Work's Aim:

“To develop models of open human resource management policies and practices so as to enable the development of a new inclusive work culture in key organisations in the public, private and community/voluntary sector in the Dublin region. This culture change will spearhead the drive towards the creation of an inclusive, diverse and equal labour market which will support access and retention through life-long learning and the application of inclusive work practices to the benefit, in particular, of those experiencing discrimination, exclusion and inequality in the labour market.”

This Report covers the period 15 May to 31 December 2002. It was written by the Equal at Work Project Manager, Caroline Creamer, with assistance from the Project Evaluator, Finbar McDonnell.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded under the EQUAL Initiative, Equal at Work is a Dublin-wide project developed through the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP). Involving 49 partner organisations from the public, private and community & voluntary sectors, the Project is piloting a number of innovations around human resource (HR) practices and policies. The 49 partner organisations are organised in an overall “Development Partnership” (DP) – the largest EQUAL DP in Europe - and also participate individually in the respective local site action committees. Its ultimate aim is to support greater equality and inclusion in organisations, both in their recruitment processes and progression options.

A survey carried out by the Dublin Employment Pact of its’ members on labour market access in 2000 identified that while economic growth had reduced the number of long-term unemployed in Dublin, there were still over 30,000 people from disadvantaged communities not captured by the unemployment figures who wanted to access work but could not do so for a variety of reasons. In addition, many people who had gained employment in the late-1990s tended to be in low-skilled, entry-level positions which, in the event of a downturn, could disappear. The survey results further showed that restrictive or outdated human resource practices contributed to the exclusion of people from the labour market and prevented progression from entry-level positions. These HR practices take different manifestations in the three sectors of the labour market – the public sector, the private sector and the community & voluntary sector.

The findings of this survey, and the subsequent analysis undertaken by labour market experts contracted to review the findings, supported the idea for Equal at Work. The Project aims to remove unnecessary barriers in recruitment and progression processes. In addition, it aims to assist organisations in developing more inclusive HR practices and a culture of equality and diversity in the workplace.

The main sources of Project innovation are the four local “sites”. Two of these relate to the public sector with one each working on HR practices in the private and community & voluntary sectors. In addition to these sites, there are inter-site working groups focusing on equality and diversity training and Dublin-Belfast Co-operation.

The main innovative actions being piloted by the four local sites are set out in the following paragraphs.

The two public sector sites are looking at the issue of recruitment in the public sector, including Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council. At present, recruitment for entry-level positions relies on applicants having certain specified educational qualifications. Many people, however, never completed a formal school education and these are effectively disqualified from these positions. The sites are looking in some detail at the competencies required for these positions and will then ask if the recruitment processes can be organised around the assessment of these competencies, rather than educational qualifications and if so, seek to change the recruitment processes so that they are competency based. Such a change would be of major benefit to people now excluded from taking up these positions. As a follow-on from this work, one of the sites, the South Dublin Public Sector Site, is looking at how people currently working in local authorities on Community Employment or Jobs

Initiative schemes, might become eligible for full-time employment if a system of competence-based recruitment was introduced.

The second public sector site, the Dublin City Public Sector Site, is also looking at how to improve the induction training for new employees and at whether there are unnecessary restrictions in place as regards workers transferring between different grades. Both of these actions may aid the progression of people in low-skill jobs in local authorities, and in other public sector organisations. The two sites are also providing equality and diversity training to existing trainers and targeted staff such as hr personnel.

The private sector site is working with a major distribution company on the northside of Dublin to pilot a Job Rotation scheme. This idea is common in some EU countries but is not much used in Ireland (it was previously piloted with Aer Rianta but this is the first private sector pilot in Ireland). The site is also working with Dublin City University (DCU) to see if graduates from the Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) programme, who wish to engage in further education, can be facilitated in accessing third level education to progress their skills without having previous formal school leaving qualifications. The site is also providing equality and diversity training to site members.

The community & voluntary sector site is reviewing HR practices in a number of organisations in this (diverse) sector to identify good practice. When this is done, the plan is to work with the National College of Ireland to develop a module of good HR practice for its existing course aimed at community & voluntary sector organisations. The site is looking at the different models of interaction that exist in the sector between organisations and government departments, with a view to setting out some criteria for a good practice relationship. It is looking at levels of remuneration in the sector as compared to equivalent public sector jobs.

Not all of the ideas mentioned above will be a success, as is the nature of innovative or pilot actions, but all of the sites have the potential to cause radical change in their respective sectors. For example, successful outcomes of the project in Dublin City Council will not only be mainstreamed within that organisation but rather, with the assistance of the Local Government Management Service Board and other such bodies, throughout local authority organisations nationally. Similar mainstreaming opportunities are also in place with regard to the third level access module and the community & voluntary sector project. The potential impact across the labour market in Dublin, and nationally, is thus very considerable.

To support the project work, the Equal at Work “Development Partnership” (DP) remained closely involved in the project during 2002 and all partners attended a half-day seminar in November 2002. The project has established a Joint Dublin-Belfast Working Group and there have already been a number of meetings with equivalent organisations in Belfast in this context. The Project is part of the national Adaptability Thematic Network under EQUAL and a first meeting in this regard was held towards the end of 2002.

Equal at Work is part of a transnational partnership involving EQUAL projects from Germany, Italy and France, each of which also involve local authorities, NGOs, social partners and the private sector. One exchange was held in 2002 (to Munich) and this proved beneficial to the Project as a whole and to the individual sites in exchanging different approaches to more flexible and accessible HR processes. An exchange visit will be held in May 2003 to Naples.

The work of the Project has been underpinned by clear procedures for financial and other matters. A draft procedures manual has been developed and will be finalised in early-2003. The Project has a full-time Project Manager, and a Development Consultant, Evaluator and Finance Officer working with it on a contractual basis. Each local site also has a full or part-time coordinator, backed up by the key organisations involved in the sites. All of these roles have been clearly specified and defined.

If successful ideas arise from the sites, the Development Partnership (DP) contains within its membership many of the players necessary to promote HR practice and policy change across broad sectors of the labour market and these are, in turn, networked to other larger national organisations. Dissemination and mainstreaming of lessons will take place through:

- two learning site conferences for DP members, other organisations and policy makers (the first in September 2003);
- inter-site working groups, e.g. the Equality & Diversity Inter-Site Working Group, connected to relevant countrywide organisations and agencies (e.g. FÁS, the Equality Authority etc.);
- reports, evaluations and proposals for submission to employers' groups, trade unions, other social partners and government departments;
- dissemination at a site level (e.g. public sector sites will use the local authority network etc.);
- dissemination through the Project's transnational partnership;
- materials distributed by DP members within their own networks;
- working with the Adaptability Thematic Network to identify common learning with other EQUAL projects under this strand in Ireland.

The work of Equal at Work in 2002 was largely around detailed planning of the actions to be undertaken and establishing the different organisational dimensions to the Project. Much of the activity under the Project will take place during 2003. The work in 2002 indicates that the hypothesis that changing HR policies and practices can contribute to equality and inclusion in the workplace is a valid one. The challenge in 2003 is to manage successful pilot actions to ensure that the considerable potential of Equal at Work is realised on the ground and lay the basis for substantial mainstreaming activities.

CHAPTER 1

EQUAL AT WORK – AN INTRODUCTION

The Equal at Work Project, which was developed through the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP), aims to pilot new HR modules across the three sectors of the Dublin economy so as to make employment and in-work progression more accessible and inclusive. It falls under the “Adaptability” Pillar of EQUAL and focuses on the barriers to inclusion within the recruitment and progression aspects of current HR practices. Introducing flexibility in these HR practices will benefit those not in employment as well as people who, although employed, are in low-skill low-pay jobs and may be vulnerable to an economic downturn. As such, the Project hopes to support the employment of people from disadvantaged groups and/or who are experiencing discrimination i.e. travellers, ex-offenders, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, early school leavers, etc. It will also support the development of satisfying careers for people in employment, with consequent benefits both for the people themselves and their organisations.

Context & Rationale

Following the announcement by the European Commission of EQUAL in May 2000, the DEP established an EQUAL Working Group from among its constituent organisations to examine how this initiative could be used to bring about change in Dublin’s labour market. By the end of that year, the Working Group had produced an analysis of the very different recruitment/progression dynamics which operate in the labour market (public sector, private sector and community & voluntary sector) and decided to target the HR systems and practices in each to develop modules for reform and change. On the basis of these initial meetings, the DEP began to draw together a forum of relevant organisations, agencies and other bodies (see Annex 1) committed to changing HR practices and work cultures in the three sectors of the Dublin labour market, with a view to building a more equal, open and inclusive labour market.



The rationale of this Project is based on the understanding that many current HR policies are contributing to labour market exclusion, in particular:

- rigid and irrelevant recruitment criteria,

- lack of supportive recruitment and induction processes,
- lack of provision for special needs,
- lack of flexible and family-friendly working policies,
- outdated HR staff training,
- unimaginative lifelong learning opportunities and progression paths, and
- insufficient knowledge of equality legislation.

Aims & Objectives

The overall aim of Equal at Work is:

“To develop models of open human resource management policies and practices so as to enable the development of a new inclusive work culture in key organisations in the public, private and community & voluntary sector in the Dublin region. This culture change will spearhead the drive towards the creation of an inclusive, diverse and equal labour market which will support access and retention through life-long learning and the application of inclusive work practices to the benefit, in particular, of those experiencing discrimination, exclusion and inequality in the labour market.”

The agreed key objectives of Equal at Work are:

1. To change human resource policy and practice in key organisations in the Dublin labour market (from the public, private and community & voluntary sectors) so as to create an accessible and open labour market, in particular for excluded groups and/or those experiencing discrimination.
2. To change human resource policy and practice in key organisations in the Dublin labour market (from the public, private and community & voluntary sectors) so that the Dublin labour market effectively addresses problems of poor employee retention, employee progression and job sustainability, particularly as they affect excluded groups and/or those experiencing discrimination.
3. To contribute to the development of a culture, in a number of organisations in the Dublin labour market and the workplace, where lifelong learning and enhanced understanding of equality and diversity will ensure systematic support for employees and labour market adaptability.

Based on this, the Project is developing modules to pilot innovative recruitment practices and systems of lifelong learning across the three sectors of the Dublin labour market and contribute to the development of an inclusive work culture through open HR practices. These modules are being developed and delivered through ‘local action sites’. The four local sites identified for programme activity are:

- Dublin City Public Sector (designated partner: Dublin City Council),
- South Dublin Public Sector (designated partner: Tallaght Partnership),
- Dublin Private Sector (designated partner: Northside Partnership)
- Dublin Community and Voluntary Sector (designated partner: Exchange House Travellers Service).

Each local site has prepared detailed workplans for its’ activities, with the site aims and objectives supporting the overall aim of Equal at Work.

Partners to DP

Because of the scope of the Project, and the desire to achieve meaningful and lasting change, a broad range of partners was essential. From the start it was an aim of the DEP that the partners themselves would develop, implement and mainstream the changes. It was, therefore, essential that key organisations in each of the three sectors form the core of the partnership. Equal at Work has brought together 49 organisations and groups from the three sectors – due to its size and complexity, this DP has taken almost two years to establish. Following the announcement of the EQUAL Programme in 2000, the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP) drew together a forum of organisations, agencies and other bodies actively committed to working with target groups so as to change HR practices and work cultures in each of the three sectors of the Dublin labour market with a view to building a more equal, open and inclusive labour market. The make-up of the DP was carefully considered in terms of what its focus should be, the partners that should be involved, its organisational and management structure and so on. The partners involved were targeted to be representative of the three employment sectors identified and include trade unions, local authorities, educational and training institutes, social partners, area partnership companies, statutory bodies, and NGOs. Many of the partner organisations would have worked with the DEP or with other partners involved in the Development Partnership (DP) on a wide variety of projects in the past while for others this would be their first time collaborating with many of the partners involved. An organisation's experience of collaborating with others was not important to the DP - rather it was an organisation's track record in, and continued commitment to initiating change to the benefit of the target groups they worked with.



The partners involved in this DP now include statutory agencies, local authorities, trade unions, employer organisations, partnership companies, training institutions, community organisations and local development agencies (see Annex 1).

Project Actions

To assist delivery of the Project's aims and objectives, the partners indicated which of the four local sites they wished to work in and, following this, worked in focus groups to define specific objectives.

The Dublin City Public Sector Site is focusing on the development of a more open recruitment process, improved induction training and mentoring, and the delivery of equality and diversity training and the development of lifelong learning policies in Dublin City Council.

The South Dublin Public Sector Site is focusing on more open recruitment and improved progression options, in South Dublin County Council and Tallaght Hospital. It is doing this through a proposed greater use of competency appraisal techniques, the delivery of equality and diversity training for employees and management, and greater progression into full-time employment for those on Community Employment (CE) and Jobs Initiative (JI) within public sector organisations.

The Private Sector Site is focusing on the implementation for the first time in an Irish private sector company of a job-rotation model (common on the EU mainland) and the development of new access routes to third level education for graduates of the Fastrack into Technology (FIT) Programme.

The Community & Voluntary Sector Site is identifying good practice, and documenting it, within the sector for HR processes and progression routes. It is also reviewing how different organisations in this diverse sector interact with government departments and asking if a model of good practice can be identified in this regard. Finally, it is attempting to compare, in a systematic way, remuneration for workers in the sector with that of equivalent workers in the public sector.

Planned Site and Project Outputs & Outcomes

Following from the above, each site, when devising its programme of activity, outlined what outputs it expects to emerge from its actions. Each of these outputs will be documented.

At the end of the Project, Dublin City Public Sector Site hopes to have:

- Carried out an audit of the work undertaken by, and competences required for, Clerical Officer and General Operative positions at Grade 3;
- Reviewed current recruitment practices for these grades;
- Developed a more open recruitment process for the above grades, based more on the competences needed than particular educational qualifications;
- Supported the development of in-work supports and strategies, including an improved induction phase for new employees;
- Strengthened the lifelong learning culture in the public sector organisations in this site, including Dublin City Council and Dublin Port Company, by piloting new opportunities which pay particular attention to the development of a person's hard and soft skills;
- Devised and delivered equality and diversity training modules;
- Trained trainers to deliver training.

The South Dublin Public Sector Site hopes to have:

- Carried out an audit (in consultation with the Dublin City Public Sector Site) of entry-level jobs in public sector organisations with competencies required defined;
- Outlined alternatives systems for assessing competencies, with a review of existing selection and recruitment procedures;
- Used the above to create progression routes for those on Community Employment (CE) and Jobs Initiative (JI) Schemes;
- Trained HR trainers;
- Delivered training in diversity and equality awareness.

The Dublin Private Sector Site hopes to have:

- Developed and demonstrated new models/mechanisms which support open human resource development and progression (Job rotation & FIT);
- Piloted Job Rotation with a distribution company in North Dublin to see how its ideas work in practice with an Irish private sector company;
- Identified and effected policy change in human resource practices and policies in the pilot project company and other private sector organisations involved in this Site;
- Worked with DCU to understand if it is possible for graduates of the FIT programme, who subsequently found employment but found their progression options limited, can find a way to return to education and gain a third-level educational qualification;
- Delivered diversity and equality awareness training in the workplace.

The Community & Voluntary Sector Site hope to have:

- Identified models of good practice on access and progression into the voluntary and community sector in Ireland;
- Produced codes of practice in relation to the above, including feeding into the development of a module on a National College of Ireland (NCI) course aimed at organisations in the community and voluntary sector;
- Delivered workshops with managers and voluntary management committees in relation to good practice in access & progression through the NCI course;
- Carried out a comparative audit which defines community and voluntary sector employment conditions and salaries in comparison to equivalent workers in the public sector;
- Reviewed the different relationships which exist between community and voluntary organisations and government departments and identified good practice in this regard;
- Liaised with the Community “Pillar” / Community Platform of the social partnership agreement and held meetings with Government Departments to discuss the above issues.

At DP level, in addition to the site outputs, it is hoped that cross-learning will occur between the sectors. Also, by working together in implementing Equal at Work, new networks will be developed while existing networks will be strengthened between partner organisations.

Changes to human resource practices and policies are anticipated. This will be seen by changes in policy and practice which lead to greater inclusion at entry-level positions and will be seen to be further developed when codes of inclusive practice in this area are agreed and policies changed. Changes in organisation/company lifelong learning opportunities are anticipated, with an expansion of such policies.

We hope that there will also be an improved understanding of what is meant by ‘equality and diversity in the workplace’. This change should be evident from the delivery of training and awareness programmes leading to an appreciation of the value of such training in each sector.

All of these site-level and project-wide outputs should ultimately benefit those seeking jobs in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland (from which they might currently be excluded) and those in jobs but with currently low progression opportunities.

Addressing the Key Principles of EQUAL

The key principles of the EQUAL Programme are:

- Thematic Approach
- Partnership Approach
- Empowerment
- Transnational Co-operation
- Innovation
- Mainstreaming

Each of these six principles has been adopted in the development and management of Equal at Work.

In relation to adopting a thematic approach, Equal at Work addresses Pillar 3 - ‘Adaptability’, Theme E, which requires a focus on ‘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’. The Project is part of the Adaptability theme at national level, organised by the TSS.

The Project is being delivered through a partnership approach whereby 49 partners, representing key actors in all sectors of the labour market, have signed up to the Development Partnership (DP), and both direct and implement this Project.

Within the Equal at Work DP, the principle of empowerment is illustrated by the fact that partners are involved in the decision-making process – particularly through the DP Management Committee which was democratically elected by the DP (see Chapter 2). At local site level, it is represented by an inclusion in all actions of the different stakeholders involved.

In relation to transnational co-operation, Equal at Work has a Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) – entitled PROMIS - with projects in Germany (Munich), Italy (Naples) and France (Bordeaux), which will inform policy and practical changes being promoted and sought by this Project (see Chapter 2).

Equal at Work will test innovative approaches in the areas of recruitment, training and progression across the three labour markets (public, private, and community & voluntary). This innovation will be process-oriented and context-oriented. Process-oriented innovations will result in the development of new methods, tools and approaches and the improvement of existing tools, while context-oriented innovations will result in changes at both the organisation, institutional and political level. Examples of the former include the hoped re-engineering of recruitment processes in two local authorities for key

entry-level grades (would be the first local authorities in Ireland to do so) and the piloting of Job Rotation by an Irish private sector company. Examples of the latter include the potential changes arising from the work of the community and voluntary sector site and the work of DCU as regards FIT progression.

In terms of the findings emerging from the Project, their dissemination and mainstreaming at a local, regional, national and international level is an integral aim of the Project. While this dimension to the Project is still at an early stage it is planned to undertake this work through a number of different approaches (see Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 2

EQUAL AT WORK – GETTING STARTED

Action 2 of Equal at Work began on 15 May 2002. It is during this phase that the main body of activity i.e. Project actions at local site and central level, will be carried out. The Action 3 phase began in May 2002 with production of the Equal at Work brochure, the first tool to assist in the dissemination process.

Start-up Operations

In preparation for the roll-out of project activity, particularly under Action 2, a number of preliminary actions were carried out:

- A Project Evaluator was recruited – following a tendering process in line with the Third Party Tendering Guidelines;
- The position of Project Consultant was re-tendered following the closure of Action 1 (again in line with the Third Party Tendering Guidelines);
- The make-up of the DP was reviewed to ensure that all necessary partners were on board;
- The local site staff were recruited;
- Meetings were held with the transnational partners to ensure all partners were aware of their responsibilities;
- The budget, as submitted in the Project Proposal, was revised in line with the actual project funding;
- Project actions were revised in line with the funding available; and
- Contracts were signed with the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment for Actions 2 & 3.

Completion of these tasks allowed implementation of the Project to begin.

Project Infrastructure

The Project is operated through four local sites, each with its own aims and objectives and control of its own budget. Each local site is being driven forward by a designated partner with responsibility for ensuring that site actions are achieved to schedule (i.e. they oversee delivery of the objectives as outlined and agreed by local site partners), and that monies are accounted for correctly. A Local Management Committee or Advisory Group assists the designated partner in this role. This Group is made up of representatives from the partners to the site (see p. 14), and it is through this forum that local site partners input into the decision-making process. Each local site is supported in all aspects of its work by the Project staff (see below for more details).

Working Groups have been established in each local site to oversee delivery of particular goals/actions. Depending on the action, it is intended that, where possible, members of the Working Group will carry

out the work. Where this is not possible or feasible, expertise is bought in (e.g. surveying work is being undertaken by the community & voluntary sector site and job audits are being undertaken by the two public sector sites).

A number of Inter-Site Working Groups have been established to achieve common objectives in terms of research briefs or training development needs. Working Groups established to date include: the Transnational Working Group, the Dublin-Belfast Working Group and the Equality & Diversity Working Group. Membership of these Working Groups is representative of all four sites and in some instances, membership has been extended to organisations and individuals who are not partners to Equal at Work where it was felt this would add value to the Project. These Working Groups are supported by the Project Staff (see below).

In addition, the local sites co-operate with each other on an *ad hoc* basis if they feel this is useful (has occurred, in particular, between the two public sector sites).

Staff & Roles

Eight people staff the Project in different capacities (see Annex 2), covering:

- a Project Manager on a full-time basis,
- a Project Development Consultant, a Project Evaluator and a Project Finance Officer on a contractual basis,
- a Local Site Co-ordinator for each of the four local sites (full-time or part-time), and
- a Local Site Administrator in the Community & Voluntary Sector Site (part-time).

The **Project Manager** is responsible for the day-to-day management, delivery and administration of the Project. This includes the establishment and management of the financial and operative systems for the Project, the production of reports (annual, financial, interim, etc.), liaison with the external bodies (evaluators, the TSS, the Managing Authority etc.), management of the transnational aspect of the project – including liaison with the transnational partners, and management of the development and implementation of the Learning Site programme. The Project Manager supports the staff of local sites in their management and rolling-out of site activity and the Local Site Management Committees in their effective spending of allocated funds. She ensures that systems are in place so that all the necessary returns to the Technical Support Structure (TSS) are made as required – both financial and operational.

The **Project Development Consultant** is responsible for assisting the Project Manager and the partner organisations in the devising, development and delivery of innovative and sustainable actions during the course of the Project. She also works closely with the transnational exchange agenda and will have an important role in identifying and supporting the dissemination and mainstreaming of project learning. She supports the work of the External Evaluator and plays a general role in ensuring the project remains on course in achieving its policy goals.

The **Project Evaluator** is responsible for carrying out a formative evaluation on all aspects on the Project – this includes working with the local sites to develop action plans and indicators, developing a monitoring framework for each of the sites in consultation with the local management committees, and carrying out an ongoing review of the management and administrative systems of the Project. This

evaluation will also examine progress on the policy objectives of the Project and, in so doing, will support the ultimate dissemination and mainstreaming of project learning. The Evaluator also assists the Project Manager or the sites with specific technical tasks on an ongoing basis.

The **Project Finance Officer** is responsible for the establishment of an accounting system for the project finances, which will be used by the designated partner organisations that have a budget to manage. Other functions include overseeing the efficacy of the financial system to ensure it meets all necessary criteria, assisting in the preparation and submission of financial returns to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment via the TSS, and assisting in and overseeing preparation of annual returns in advance of audits.

The **Local Site Co-ordinators/Administrators** are responsible for the day-to-day management, delivery and administration of the local site action plans in line with the aims and objectives of Equal at Work – this includes overseeing the finances for that site. Other tasks include supporting the partners affiliated to the Sites and keeping them informed of developments on a regular basis, supporting the policy development elements of the Sites, working and reporting to the Local Site Management Committees, and attending meetings / conferences / events at local, regional, national and European level as required.

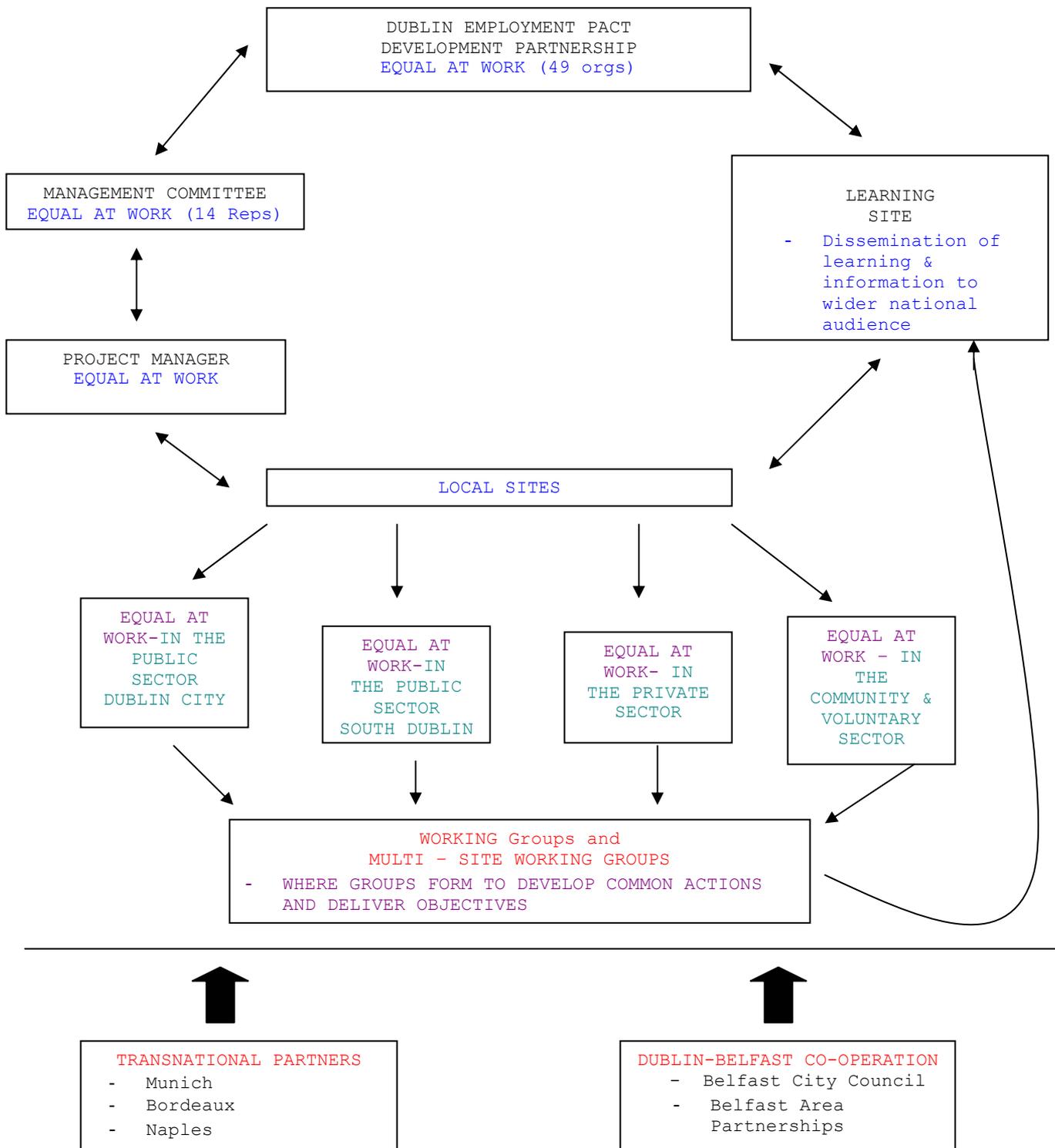
Management Structure

Equal at Work is overseen and managed by a DP Management Committee (see Annex 3). The Equal at Work Development Partnership (DP) elected this Committee at a meeting held during the Action 1 Phase. The DP Management Committee is responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of the Project and the Project Manager supports them in this role. The organisations and interests represented on this Committee include trade unions, local area partnerships, local authorities, and training organisations. The DP Management Committee has direct links to the Board of Management of the Dublin Employment Pact both through the Director of the Dublin Employment Pact who is a member and Chair of the Committee, and through two members appointed to the Committee by the Board of the DEP.

The DP Management Committee has responsibility for effective financial management of Equal at Work. It has established a **Financial Sub-Committee** to this end, which works on behalf of the whole DP.

The **Local Site Management Committees** (also known as Advisory Committees or Local Site Committees) are responsible for assisting the designated partner in the delivery of the actions. The make-up of these local site partnerships reflects the structure of the social partner model upon which the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP) is based. The Local Site Management Committees support the appointed staff (i.e. Local Site Co-ordinators and Administrators) and oversee the spending and management of the local site budget in the delivery of actions. They also provide ongoing advice, at a site level, as to how the project actions can be effectively implemented.

FIG. 1: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Recruitment of Participants

The third and fourth quarters of 2002 were concerned with detailed project (site) planning and putting in place of all appropriate systems. Recruitment of participants is scheduled to begin in early-2003.

Based on the number and range of actions to be undertaken during the course of this Project, it is expected that the core categories of people on which this project will have an impact are:

- Unemployed people who might now be overlooked for certain jobs. This group is targeted through the changes to recruitment processes in the two public sector sites and potentially through the recruitment of people through the Job Rotation programme. This group would include long term unemployed people and those in danger of becoming long-term unemployed, including early school-leavers, young people at risk, women returners, lone parents, low-skilled and unskilled workers in impermanent employment, disabled workers, former prisoners and drug users, and non-nationals marginally connected with the labour market. This group may also be helped in the longer term through the equality and diversity training being undertaken in all four sites.
- Employed people in organisations across the four sites who will have improved progression options. In the local authorities, this may arise out of easier transferring between certain grades. In the private sector site, Job Rotation will create progression opportunities for existing workers and the FIT action may allow for progression of people with existing FIT qualifications. The work of the community and voluntary sector site should allow for greater progression by people in organisations in that sector.
- Human resources personnel in all of the project sectors, who will be provided with training in any new techniques used, and will be provided with the tools to undertake subsequent equality and diversity training.
- Employers in the private sector, including through DP partners - the Small Firms Association, the Northside Partnership Employers Network and the Dublin City Enterprise Board; public sector employers through the Dublin City Council, Dublin Port Company, Tallaght Hospital, South Dublin County Council and others; and voluntary or community organisations.

Delivery of Project Actions

The Project Manager is responsible for management, delivery and administration of the overall Project while the Local Site Co-ordinators/Administrators are responsible for the management, delivery and administration of the local site programmes of activity with the assistance of the Project Manager and Project Development Consultant. With the assistance of the Project Evaluator, each site has developed detailed action plans around each goal, which specify actions to be taken to achieve the goal, the timeframe for these actions and who is responsible for these actions. A template used to draw up these plans is attached as Annex 4.

The Dublin City Public Sector Site aims to foster a culture of equality through open and transparent recruitment, retention and progression policies and practices that support the development of a diverse, inclusive workplace within the partner organisations which will be supported by life-long learning. Achievement of these goals will involve an audit of existing entry-level opportunities and in-work retention/support strategies; examining current recruitment mechanisms to identify their inclusiveness

towards socially excluded groups; examining current qualification and competency assessment criteria/practice with a view to identifying alternative competency appraisal systems; reviewing recruitment practices; and examining current lifelong learning opportunities (hard and soft skills) with a view to piloting new opportunities.

The main focus of the South Dublin Public Sector Site is to identify and develop new systems and HR policies in two public sector employment sites (South Dublin County Council, Tallaght Hospital) so as to facilitate equality of access to public sector entry-level jobs for people who experience labour market entry and progression difficulties, while supporting the whole sector to move towards greater awareness of, and commitment to, a diverse, equal workforce. This will involve conducting an audit on 'entry-level' jobs which will allow an examination of current skills and competencies/qualifications required for such posts and will lead to an examination of systems for competency assessment & highlight models of good, alternative, inclusive practice; working with the HR/recruitment personnel to construct alternative ways to assess competencies/qualifications for entry-level employees; and identifying current 'jobs' held by CE & JI participants and tracking their progression into employment 'proper', and through this identifying barriers to progression.

The main focus of the Private Sector Site is to develop and demonstrate new models and policies which will be effective in bringing about structural change in training, recruitment, diversity and human resource management in the private sector, and to open up opportunities for access, progression and career development for all, in particular for those currently excluded or discriminated against and to promote lifelong learning among the organisations involved in this Site. This will involve rolling out a model of job-rotation in a private sector company; and exploring progression barriers identified with the FIT programme, the means to create bridging opportunities for FIT graduates into further/higher education and developing alternative routes which support FIT graduates to progress to further education.

The Community & Voluntary Sector Site aims to identify and establish the means by which changes and improvements in recruitment and work practices can be introduced within / amongst the community and voluntary sector organisations. This will result in improved access within this sector by traditionally excluded groups, retention of existing employees through on-the-job training and upskilling and progression through clearly defined career opportunities, awareness of potential barriers that may exist and may impede equality and diversity in these practices in the sector. This will involve examining existing practices and perceived barriers to equality in employment, (including access, recruitment, skills appraisal and employee selection), and career development (including progression, in-work training, lifelong learning, and peer support) via a survey being overseen by the site. It will also involve proposing codes of inclusive practice in access & progression for the community & voluntary sector; carrying out an audit on current pay and conditions in the sector and comparing these to those in the public sector; and working with the National College of Ireland to incorporate learning arising into a training module for organisations from the community & voluntary sector.

Transnational Focus

Transnationality is a core theme of EQUAL. It is recognised that transnationality can lead to a better insight into the nature and forms of discrimination, inequality and labour market exclusion that exists

throughout Europe. Through observing forms of discrimination and learning how they are dealt with (both through policy and in practice), opportunities arise to transfer learning, on a two-way basis. Transnationality also facilitates and encourages mainstreaming.

Equal at Work has established a transnational partnership (PROMIS) with EQUAL projects, under the 'Employability' and 'Adaptability' strands, in Munich, Bordeaux and Naples¹. All projects under this partnership are citywide initiatives composed of key interests and actors and have joined forces on the basis that they are each large urban labour markets concerned with access and equality issues. The purpose of this partnership is to maximise opportunities for inclusive and equal access to the labour market to the benefit of those currently excluded, and to facilitate the exchange of experience and information in achieving this.

The partners to PROMIS have completed the first of their Transnational Exchanges – held in Munich in September 2002. Equal at Work was represented at project level and by representatives of the four local sites. During the Exchange, representatives attended a conference on labour market change (an annual conference hosted by the City of Munich) and had the opportunity to learn of, and visit, projects working with socially excluded groups in the Munich Region while also exchanging information on approaches to developing formal and informal learning in the work place.



Before each transnational exchange, the partners from Equal at Work meet and set out objectives for the exchange. A paper is then sent to the host organisations, informing them of the outcomes that Equal at Work would like from the exchange. After each exchange, a further meeting is held to review outcomes.

Relationships with other Agencies

Equal at Work has, from its inception, been open to the involvement of other agencies, organisations and individuals – this is based on the belief among partners to the Project that all expertise can add

¹ The PROMIS Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) originally involved a partner from The Hague and an associated partner from Brno in the Czech Republic. In September 2002, The Hague partner had to withdraw due to a change in its financial circumstances. The associate partner from Brno also withdrew at this time due to its failure to proceed to Action 2. Following their withdrawal, the PROMIS document was revised and revalidated by the remaining partners and their National Managing Authorities.

value to the Project. It is for this reason that the make-up of the Equality & Diversity Inter-Site Working Group has been opened up to individuals and organisations not already involved in the Project but are critically relevant to impacting on mainstreaming organisations and bodies.

The EQUAL Programme in Ireland proposes to develop a mainstreaming strategy in co-operation with the mainstream Northern Ireland Authorities and the Special EU Programmes Body. It is hoped that North/South Co-operation will broaden the range of projects from which learning could be extracted and facilitate mutual learning through sharing of knowledge, successful practices, etc. In light of this, Equal at Work has been developing links with a number of employment organisations – employers and policy makers – in Belfast (see Chapter 3). It is proposed that links will be informal and centred around the exchange of information. It is hoped that, over time, these links can be formalised and made sustainable.

As well as developing relationships with other agencies, Equal at Work is also developing links with other Irish EQUAL Projects, especially in the ‘Employability’ and ‘Adaptability’ strands.

At a site level, relationships are also developing with organisations outside the Development Partnership. For example, Dublin City Council has travelled to other local authorities in Ireland to review equality and diversity training and has made contact with the network of local authorities in relation to future dissemination and mainstreaming. Also, the community & voluntary sector site has made contact with its “parent” pillar involved in the national social partnership agreements and with the Department of Rural, Community and Gaeltacht Affairs, which includes the unit that developed the White Paper on the sector in recent years.

CHAPTER 3

EQUAL AT WORK - ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The following is a summary of Project activity from 15 May to 31 December 2002.

What has been achieved?

Recruitment: Due to the scale of Equal at Work, both in terms of objectives and organisational structure, staff were appointed early in the Action 2 phase. The Project Evaluator was recruited, following a tendering process, in May 2002 and took up position in June 2002. The Project Finance Officer, who is an existing member of the DEP Staff, had her contract extended to cover the EQUAL Project in May. The position of Project Development Consultant was again put out to tender, following closure of Action 1 activity, and the Project Development Consultant was appointed in July 2002 to assist with Action 2 and Action 3 activity. Following budget revisions, four Local Site Co-ordinators/Administrators were appointed over the period September to December 2002.

Attendance at EQUAL Events: Representatives from Equal at Work participated in key events organised by the European Commission and the Managing Authorities of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to date:

- The EQUAL Conference in Barcelona in May 2002
- The North/South event in Carrick-on-Shannon in May 2002.

Representatives from Equal at Work have also participated in the Adaptability Thematic Network, which met for the first time in October 2002 in Dublin. Participation in this Network provided the Project with an opportunity to hear what other Projects under this Strand were doing, to meet project staff, and to identify commonalities and areas around which projects could possibly work together when projects have developed their programmes further.

DP Management Committee Development Day: Before the roll-out of Action 2 activity, a development/team building day for the DP Management Committee was held, as its role in Project development and delivery was increasing. The purposes of this day, which was held in June 2002 and facilitated by the Project Development Consultant, were:

- To support the Committee to be fully aware of the Final Project Plan and its elements
- To support the Committee to identify ways of working together in a strategic manner
- To introduce the Committee to the Evaluator for the Project
- To work with the Evaluator in relation to the ultimate desired project outcomes and the role of the Management Committee.

Closure of Action 1: The Equal at Work Action 1 accounts were audited in June 2002 by Grant Thornton². A closure report relating to Action 1 activity was prepared as part of this closure process –

² Grant Thornton is responsible for auditing the accounts of the Dublin Employment Pact. As the Dublin Employment Pact is leading Equal at Work, the Project's accounts, including budgets managed at local site level, will be audited by this firm.

this was prepared by the Project Manager based on a template circulated by the TSS. Both documents were submitted to the TSS in early July 2002. The outstanding 20% ESF funding for Action 1 was received in December 2002 from the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment.

Project Finances: Based on monies awarded to the Project for Action 2, the budget proposal submitted was revised to match monies offered. This involved a complete revision of the central budget and local site budgets and, based on this, a review of site activity. Having bought into the rhetoric that the EQUAL Programme was to be innovative and pioneering and that only large scale projects which would bring together key players from the various sectors who would be willing to work together in partnership at a national and transnational level to try out new ways of dealing with and combating discrimination and inequality in the workplace would be funded, the DP were disappointed to discover that the original budget submitted as part of the Funding Proposal was reduced by over 45%. It was initially feared that this would have a negative impact on the Project in terms of DP members withdrawing their support, as many of them had bought into the Project based on its ambition, scale and expected budgetary resources, and the Project would be able to achieve little of what it had initially set out. However, because time and resources had been committed at the development stage of the Project to establishing a strong and committed DP, not least through the employment of a Project Consultant to develop the partnership, and there was a recognition that such an initiative was worthwhile and long overdue, partners agreed to remain involved and to work within the financial constraints set by the budget revisions. Partners also investigated the possibility of securing funding from their own organisations to meet the shortfall in cash available to the project. While this proved not to be feasible for the majority, partners have, where possible, agreed to commit €630 to the running of the Project.

In July 2002, Equal at Work was selected to undergo a Preventive Audit by the ESF Financial Control Unit, which was to include a review of accounting systems and recording procedures used by the Project. This proved a very useful exercise in that it advised the Project on how best to manage and document its finances.

Upon receipt of the 80% advance of ESF Funding for 2002, Financial Agreements were drawn up between the DEP and the designated partner of the local sites relating to the management of ESF funding and the provision of adequate match funding. Upon signing the Agreements, local sites were issued with a cheque for 80% of their ESF Requirement for 2002 (based on budgets submitted following the revisions in July 2002). From this point, the local sites controlled their own budgets.

To end-2002, Quarterly Returns had been submitted to the TSS for the periods 15 May to 30 September and 1 October to 31 December. The Returns provide Project Staff and the TSS with both an overview of project activity to date as well as expenditure incurred and expected expenditure in the next Quarter.

Procedures Manual: During the course of the Preventive Audit, it was suggested by the ESF Financial Control Unit that a Procedures Manual for Equal at Work should be drawn up covering all aspects of the project (i.e. management, finances, etc.). A draft Procedures Manual has been prepared and is currently with the TSS and the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment for comment. Once finalised, this will be circulated to the designated partner in each local site.

Local Site Activity: As a result of having to review site action plans, based on ESF monies awarded to the Project being less than anticipated, and the consequent delay in funding being released to Projects by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, the roll-out of Action 2 activity took some time to get fully started. The sites had, by end-December 2002, finalised their action plans, and were giving consideration to what indicators they needed to assist in measuring the inputs and outcomes around specific actions. This has been done with the assistance of the Project Evaluator. A number of Local Site Working Groups had begun initial work in rolling out their action plans e.g. undergoing the tendering process for pieces of research (C&V Sector Site), liaising with other sites in carrying out audits of current recruitment systems (Dublin City and South Dublin Public Sector Sites), and securing an employer to undertake the job-rotation model (Private Sector Site). In other words, as well as the planning, a range of practical preparations were being put in place in late-2002 to prepare for the Project activities.

Local Site Co-ordinators have, since November 2002, been preparing Monthly Progress Reports, covering all aspects of the Project (Action 2 activity, transnational activity, Action 3 activity, finances, etc.). These are circulated to all project staff and will be the basis for the preparation of newsletters on the project in 2003, which, it is intended, will be produced every four months.

Partners to the Project are promoting the Project within their organisations through articles in in-house newsletters (e.g. SIPTU), presentations to committees (e.g. Dublin Employment Pact, Dublin City Council) and word of mouth.

Action 3 Activity: Action 3 activity was small in 2002, partly due to the gradual pick-up of Action 2 Activity. In saying that, dissemination of information has taken place through a number of mediums: the development of a Project logo so that the Project has its own identity, the Project launch, the Project brochure which is circulated at all project occasions, the hosting of DP Meetings at which each partner organisation who attends is asked to bring other members of staff from their organisation to introduce them to the Project, the involvement of non-Equal at Work partners in a number of Working Groups, links with other EQUAL Projects, and through initial preparations for the first conference of Equal at Work on 'Creating the Equal Workplace'.



Project Publicity: To coincide with the official Launch of the Project on 10th June 2002, an article was published in the *Irish Times*, which gave a brief overview of who was involved and what Equal at Work was about. A further article on the Project was printed in July in the *Northside People*, a weekly newspaper circulated in Dublin's northside. The inaugural *EQUAL On-line Newsletter*, published at the end of September 2002, contained an article on Equal at Work, which focussed on the set-up of the Project and the importance of partnership in achieving the aims and objectives of the Project. Plans are currently afoot to establish a PR Sub-Committee, which will promote Equal at Work in the media.

The Equal at Work Project Brochure was produced in October and is based on an earlier version that was prepared for the Project Launch in June 2002. Designed as a booklet, the brochure gives an overview of the aims and objectives of the project and local sites, the partners involved, the rationale behind the projects aims and objectives, the transnational partnership and the organisational structure.

Project Evaluation – Quantitative & Qualitative

The Project Evaluator was appointed in May 2002, the aim being that the work would constitute a formative rather than a retrospective evaluation. This approach was adopted as it was felt the project could use such a technical input on an ongoing basis, in order to maximise its potential, from the start, to have a longer-term mainstreaming impact.

This approach has proven beneficial to the Project, particularly given the somewhat complex operational structures. Thus, the evaluator has had a key role in assisting the local sites to prepare detailed action plans around their objectives – through this process, the local sites were required to pay particular attention to the allocation of tasks, the process, the indicators, and to the mainstreaming of the findings. This planning process also provided an opportunity to review site activity based on the budget changes of July 2002 following the awarding of funding. By end-2002, the Evaluator was supporting the sites in starting their activities, and offering advice on particular actions.

The **Interim Evaluation Report** on the Equal at Work Project is due in May 2003 and will be made available to partners of Equal at Work, the TSS, the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, the European Commission and other interested parties.

Benefits to DP

Because the roll-out of Project activity was at an early stage at end-2002, members of the DP had not yet benefited directly from project outcomes. However, indirectly the member organisations have been presented with opportunities to network with each other and exchange information on the work of the sites to which they are affiliated.

A meeting of the Equal at Work DP was held on 11th November 2002 to update members on project developments, both in general terms and at local site level, and to introduce representatives from the partner organisations, not previously involved in the Project or aware of its focus, to the work of the Project. It also provided an opportunity for member organisations to network. As part of the

afternoon's proceedings, Niall Crowley, Chief Executive, Equality Authority, outlined the legislative and regulatory frameworks in place in Ireland and the work of the Equality Authority and other agencies in pushing forward the equality agenda. He also praised the EQUAL Initiative, and the Equal at Work Project, as a means of carrying innovative policy initiatives into the reality of Irish workplaces.

Working Group Progress

A number of Working Groups have now been established and are pursuing the achievement of particular goals of the Project e.g. North/South Working Group, Equality and Diversity Inter-Site Working Group and the Transnational Sub-Committee.

North/South Co-operation: Following the North/South event in Carrick-on-Shannon, it was agreed by the DP Management Committee that a North/South Working Group should be established to oversee the development of practical North/South links, particularly with organisations in Belfast with an employability focus. The North/South Working Group was established in May 2002. Meetings are ongoing with representatives of Belfast City Council, the Belfast Area Partnerships and other organisations from the community & voluntary, public and private sectors. In December 2002, a Joint Dublin-Belfast Working Group was established to develop informal links, based on the resources and timeframe available, and to investigate approaches and funding sources to facilitate the exchange of information on employability issues.

Equality & Diversity: Following initial discussions with the Equality Authority around establishment of an Inter-Site Equality & Diversity Working Group, the inaugural meeting was held on 21 November 2002. Membership of this Working Group is representative of the four sites and has also been opened up to organisations and individuals outside of the Equal at Work Project. The Terms of Reference of this Working Group is: "To support, co-ordinate and advise on the practical application of the equality & diversity objectives as identified by the four sites". A *Menu* of what the Working Group can achieve over its lifetime has been devised and this covers issues such as equality legislation training, awareness raising (both ground specific and integrated packages), proofing templates, impact assessment guidelines, equality reviews, and equality policies for the workplace. The menu is designed to facilitate people getting involved in areas that most interest them rather than having to be involved in all aspects. Among the "outside" representatives is the Project Manager of the TRED project, also being funded under the Adaptability strand of EQUAL in Ireland.

Transnational Sub-Committee: This Sub-Committee was established in May 2002 to assist project staff in organising transnational activity. It involves putting forward suggestions for site visits during exchanges to the host city, putting forward suggestions as to who would be best suited to travel on exchanges, agreeing on how information gathered during exchanges should be disseminated, etc.

Links with other Organisations

As outlined in Chapter 2, Equal at Work is actively developing links with organisations and projects not involved in Equal at Work – this is particularly happening through the Equality & Diversity Inter-Site

Working Group and the Joint Dublin-Belfast Working Group. Through this policy, Equal at Work is ensuring that other perspectives are taken into consideration on the Project.

Benefit of Transnational Element

During the period May to December 2002, representatives of Equal at Work travelled to Munich on two occasions: the first a three-day meeting for Project Staff and the second the first transnational exchange of the programme under the Transnational Co-operation Agreement, PROMIS.

Tri-lateral Partner Meeting June 2002: From 6th – 9th June 2002, the Project Planning Group (Project Manager, Project Development Consultant and Director, DEP) travelled to Munich for a trilateral meeting of Munich - Dublin – Brno. During the course of this meeting, issues addressed included:

- clarification on common focus between Projects (incl. upskilling, accreditation, education/ lifelong learning, recruitment practices, progression, profiling, changing mental attitudes, gender mainstreaming, diversity in the workplace and empowerment);
- review of transversal themes (i.e. profiling, change of mental attitudes, gender mainstreaming, diversity culture in the workplace and new learning approaches / upskilling / accreditation);
- preparation of a draft programme for the Munich Transnational Exchange.

Transnational Exchange, Munich: The Munich Transnational Exchange took place from 23 to 25 September 2002. The Equal at Work delegation on this Exchange numbered eleven. As part of the Exchange programme, participants were invited to present a paper on the Dublin Labour Market at Munich's Annual Employment Conference, the theme of which was *Restructuring Labour Markets: Strategies of European Cities in the Framework of the EU Initiative EQUAL*. Participants were afforded the opportunity to meet with partners of the Munich Equal Project and to go on a number of site visits to projects, some of which were not part of the EQUAL Programme but which had a training / return to work focus. As well as preparing a general report on the Exchange, local site representatives prepared reports on the projects / organisations they visited and these were circulated to members of the sites (the template on which the information was collated was the same for each site).



As a result of these meetings, it is becoming apparent that the added value, which PROMIS will bring to Equal at Work, will be of importance. Not only are networks being developed but having partners involved in both the employability and adaptability strands of EQUAL means that partners are in a position to learn from, and disseminate learning across, two thematic networks. To improve communication among partners, and aid dissemination and exchange of information, it was agreed that a Chat Room for project staff be created through Yahoo. This enables project staff (i.e. the Transnational Steering Committee) to hold virtual meetings. By so doing, partners are now in a position to monitor each other's progress and link-up on specific actions. A number of on-line meetings were held in November and December 2002 between transnational partners in Dublin, Munich, Naples and Bordeaux, an outcome of which is that each partner is currently devising a matrix of activity which indicates what each partner or 'site' is doing, when they are doing it, and what they hope that activity will achieve. It is hoped that these will enable partners to be more aware of what they are doing and, by indicating timeframes involved, may permit transnational partners to work together on specific actions or to pursue bi-lateral co-operation on particular elements.

CHAPTER 4

EQUAL AT WORK – EFFECTIVENESS TO DATE

The period 15 May to 31 December 2002 was largely spent carrying out the preparatory work to ensure the smooth roll-out of Action 2 and Action 3 activity. This involved, primarily, the recruitment of staff, the revision of site actions and budgets, and the further development of goal action plans by each of the sites. In so doing, the sites were in a position to begin rolling-out their site activity in early-2003.

The process involved in getting the Project to this stage has been a “learning curve” for everyone involved. It is fair to say that the effort to get the organisational side of Equal at Work to the point it had reached at end-2002 was greater than originally expected. It is a complex structure and required considerable hands-on effort from the partners involved.

To ensure the sustainability of the DP, given the ambitious nature of the Project and the size of the Development Partnership (DP), it was recognised that all partners must be involved and offered the opportunity to voice their opinion at each stage of the project. It was important that, during the preparatory stage (including the Action 1 phase), all partners were kept informed and involved in the process. As a result, the Dublin Employment Pact, as overall designated partner, employed key staff (i.e. the Project Development Consultant and the Project Manager) at an early stage. In so doing, the Pact established a structure, which ensured that partners were made aware of all developments – this in effect meant that partners had ownership of the Project and were in a position to input into the process. Decisions in relation to the action plans, objectives, priorities and staffing issues have been made with the widest possible circle of stakeholders, including representatives of excluded groups. The organisational and management structures of the Project have been arrived at through a process of facilitated workshops where all partners are ‘fellow travellers’ on the journey.



The net result is that the partnerships at site level and in the DP have strengthened in their commitment to the project and to each other, as regards how they work together. They have worked hard on finalising their action plans and ensuring they are clear about their objectives and their relationship to the wider objectives of Equal at Work. The 2002 process has also ensured their objectives are realistic in terms of the time and resources available to them.

Changing Policies and Practices

The aim of Equal at Work is to change HR policies and practices in organisations across all economic sectors in Dublin. These include:

- recruitment practices in local authorities and perhaps in other public sector organisations;
- induction training and opportunities for career progression in public sector organisations;
- greater opportunities for FIT graduates to progress through third level education;
- potential addition of Job Rotation as a tool that Irish companies can use when undergoing training or change;
- more open HR practices in the community and voluntary sector;
- fairer rewards for people working in the community and voluntary sector;
- a greater commitment to equality and diversity in organisations in all sectors.

To a large extent, the outputs of Equal at Work will have implications at the level of the organisation. This is not to say that there are not some potential national policy implications (see below) but most learning is likely to arise at the level of the organisation, across the different sectors.

In 2002, the work was largely around defining the changes that Equal at Work wishes to see, and beginning the process of piloting these changes. The Project supports a partnership approach to change so, for example, the proposed changes in recruitment processes in the local authorities are being discussed with unions, management and existing staff. Change would be introduced on a partnership basis (the Project has already been discussed at the Partnership Forum within Dublin City Council).

The slowdown in Irish economic growth since 2000 has changed the context within which the Project will be delivered. In a time of labour shortages, employers in all sectors are open to new ideas around recruitment and opportunities open up for progression that may not otherwise exist. In 2002, unemployment in Dublin had begun to rise again, and a further increase was forecast for 2003. The attitude of the Project is that the changes needed in HR practices are needed for the long-term and the current economic climate should not distract organisations from making changes that are in their long-term interest.

By end-2002, the engagement from the different stakeholders involved in the potential change processes in all four sites was a sign that the changes are valid, or at least are worth trying, and this is perhaps the main achievement of the 2002 work. By end-2003, there will be considerably more evidence as to which changes are likely to take root in practice.

Tackling Exclusion, Discrimination & Inequalities in the Labour Market

Equal at Work focuses on HR practices and policies in organisations. As such, it does not deal directly with excluded people and groups. However, the Project believes strongly that its outputs will have an important long-term impact on exclusion, discrimination and inequality.

The following are examples from across the sites to justify this assertion.

The grades being reviewed in local authorities as part of Equal at Work, with a view to more open recruitment, employ tens of thousands of employees across the country. At present, the Project is reviewing whether, for some posts, there is a demand for academic qualifications which are not in fact needed for people to do the jobs in practice. If this is the case, and the jobs can be re-defined around the competences required to undertake them, this will create a large number of potential job opportunities for people who may not have formal educational qualifications. This could potentially have significant long-term implications for people in this situation, who are now effectively excluded from these jobs.

People who have qualified from the Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) programme in recent years have generally been able to gain employment, often on good salaries, in the IT sector. However, the success of FIT has created an issue down the line when these people subsequently want to progress within their company, or change jobs. In these situations, it often emerges that a third level IT qualification is the standard or benchmark required. While individuals may sometimes be able to get around this, based on their experience, an option to gain such a qualification would also be useful. Equal at Work will look at the feasibility of this in the context of DCU. If successful, it would have an impact on essentially unfair discrimination against FIT graduates around Ireland.

The nature of the community & voluntary sector in Ireland means that it contains many small organisations, perhaps reliant on multiple sources of funding, perhaps evolving over time to reflect new needs and changing criteria within state funding programmes. Many of the people in the sector have formal qualifications and considerable experience and expertise. Yet often they feel that they earn considerably less than people in equivalent jobs in other sectors. While the sectors are different (and the community and voluntary sector will always want some flexibility), some data as to whether such a gap exists (both in pay and in pension entitlements and other conditions of employment) would strengthen the case for improved funding for the sector in Ireland. This fits with the general thrust of the White Paper on the Community & Voluntary Sector on strengthening the sector. If some progress is made in this regard, it will promote equality between the different sectors of the Irish labour market.

A fourth example arises from the equality and diversity training being undertaken at all four of the Equal at Work Project sites. This should directly promote long-term commitments to equality and to fighting discrimination in the workplace. (Unfortunately, two organisations in the DP that had been approved for funding to undertake equality audits – outside the context of EQUAL – had this funding withdrawn at end-2002 due to changes in public expenditure priorities.)

While the core aim of the Project is to bring about organisational change to the benefit of employees and future staff, the Project has the potential to indirectly impact on exclusion, inequality and discrimination in the Dublin, and wider Irish, labour market.

Potential Impact of Equal at Work on National / EU Policy

As stated above, the main impact of the Project will be on organisations. It is early to say what policy implications might arise. However, these could potentially include;

- broader implications for recruitment in the public sector. Some work in this regard has already been undertaken by the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission, with which the local authority organisations on the public sector sites have liaised;
- implications for progression within public sector organisations in general, and particularly whether artificial restrictions prevent movement between grades;
- implications for third level educational institutions in terms of accrediting prior learning (from courses such as FIT) in considering course applications;
- implications for how government departments and agencies deal with organisations in the community and voluntary sector, i.e. can a model of good practice be introduced?
- implications for equality and diversity in the workplace based on work carried out by the Equality & Diversity Inter-Site Working Group. This Working Group aims to produce an equality & diversity model cross several grounds of the Equality Act to impact on national practice across the labour market;
- implications for the EU through the Transnational Co-operation Agreement. Partners to PROMIS are aiming to produce a model for in-work progression for underskilled groups and a model of equality & diversity training which could have EU-wide applicability, particularly in informing the European Employment Strategy.

The Project is conscious that it falls under the EQUAL and European Employment Strategy Pillar 3 ‘Adaptability’, Theme E, which requires a focus on ‘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.’

The Project also has ongoing liaison with the Equality Authority and may have implications for the practical roll-out of equality and diversity training in Ireland.

Transfer of learning to the mainstream

Action 3 of the Project – the Learning Site level - is designed to ensure mainstreaming outcomes within partner organisations (DP) and on a broader level. The two Learning Site Conferences, to be hosted by the DP, will bring together the DP partners with representatives from local government agencies, national Government Departments, as well as social partners from all pillars and strands, including those experiencing discrimination in the labour market. These events will provide an opportunity for DP members to present the learning from the local sites, disseminate the lessons among themselves and with other interested parties and work to implement policy and practice change in their own organisations and within their employment sectors which will combat inequality and discrimination.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the dissemination of Project results at a local, regional, national and international level will be an integral part of the mainstreaming process. This dissemination will be undertaken through a number of formats including:

- promotional material produced at DP level e.g. brochures, newsletters, etc.
- the publication of reports at the DP level and Learning Site level;
- press releases through various media;
- launches e.g. Project Launch, Report Launches, etc.; and

- Learning Site Conferences (x2) – each with a specific role to play in disseminating information on the Project from what it aims to do to what it has achieved. The first conference is planned for 25 September 2003.

All stakeholders i.e. DP members will participate actively in the formative evaluation planned for the Project. This participation heightens the possibility that stakeholders, with policy change powers, will take on board the recommendations.

Key groups and organisations involved in the four sites will also disseminate their findings. While this may be through more focused activities, workshops etc, this smaller audience may allow for a more direct transfer. In the two public sector sites, the Dublin local authorities involved intend, through the Local Government Management Services Board, to share their experiences and products (training modules, codes of good practice, manuals) with other local authorities in Ireland. This may generate considerable interest, given the practical nature of the outputs involved, and the fact that HR procedures are likely to be similar in all Irish local authorities.

The private sector site is anxious that the lessons learned with one or two private sector employers will be shared with other employers, including equality and diversity training or HR management training modules. Conduits will include the SFA, which is a member of this site, and the Northside Partnership Business Network. Trade union partners are also interested to share the learning with other trade unions and to mainstream learning within their own unions into other branches or sections.

The community & voluntary sector is interested to share its lessons with relevant government departments and agencies, in particular those that fund the voluntary sector. It has already made contact with the Department of Rural, Community and Gaeltacht Affairs in this regard. It is also interested to share outputs (research, reports, training, policy recommendations) with other organisations in the community & voluntary sector through seminars where a broader ‘buy in’ can be achieved.

Representatives of the Equal at Work Project are also committed to the Thematic Networks. Equal at Work is involved in the Adaptability Thematic Network which feeds into the European Adaptability Thematic Network. Through this Forum, Equal at Work has the opportunity to influence both national and EU policy around human resource (hr) practices within the public, private and community & voluntary labour markets. The work of the Joint Dublin-Belfast Working Group may also influence national policy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Funded under the EQUAL Initiative, Equal at Work is a Dublin-wide project created and developed through the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP). Involving 49 partner organisations from the public, private and community & voluntary sectors, the Project is attempting to develop new and more inclusive methods of recruitment and in-work progression, and to break entrenched patterns of labour market exclusion and long-term unemployment. The Project is focusing on human resource (HR) practices, policies and systems.

Based on research undertaken by the Dublin Employment Pact, Equal at Work aims to alter HR practices by focusing on the barriers to recruitment and progression resulting from poor practices within organisations. In addition, it aims to assist the HR systems of organisations to develop more inclusive practise and to promote a culture of equality and diversity in the workplace.

The Project is operating across four “sites”, reflecting the different economic sectors in Dublin, which tend to have distinct HR practices and policies:

- Two public sector sites are reviewing recruitment for certain grades within Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council, and in Tallaght Hospital, looking at possible transition routes for people currently undertaking CE or JI work in these organisations to full-time positions, reviewing induction training in the organisations, looking at restrictions between transferring between grades and providing equality and diversity training;
- A private sector site is piloting a Job Rotation scheme in a north Dublin company, looking at possible transition routes for FIT graduates into third level education and providing equality and diversity training;
- A community & voluntary sector site is identifying good HR practices (recruitment and progression) within the sector, planning to document this practice into a module to be taken forward by the National College of Ireland (NCI), reviewing the different models of interaction between the sector and state agencies and government departments, and comparing salaries within the sector with those in equivalent public sector jobs.

In 2002, the Project work involved detailed planning in relation to the four sites, putting the networks in place to undertake the pilot actions and for subsequent dissemination. Project actions were scheduled to begin in early-2003.

Lessons to Date

Because the Project is now at the initial roll-out phase of Action 2 activity, there are no major lessons to date as regards potential changes to HR policies or practices. The main finding in this regard is that the initial hypothesis (that HR practices can act as a barrier to equality and inclusion) would appear be borne out by the work to date. The challenge for 2003 for the Project is to implement its actions and

show that more inclusive HR practices can emerge which will not only not damage, but will in fact work to the benefit of, the organisations involved, and their employees.

On the organisational side, a major lesson has been the work and resources needed to bring a project of this scale and ambition to this stage. The Project has necessitated that all decisions in relation to action plans, objectives, priorities and staffing issues are made with the widest possible circle of stakeholders, including representatives of excluded groups. The organisational and management structures of the Project have evolved from facilitated workshops, with all partners now project stakeholders. Adopting this organisational and management structure was necessary to give the DP ownership of the Project and to make it aware of the benefits of being involved in such an initiative.

Mainstreaming of the project, particularly in terms of its potential impacts, is currently under way. As stated in Chapter 4, the main impact of the Project will be on organisations. Mainstreaming is already taking place through a number of different mediums including promotional material e.g. brochures, newsletters, etc., press releases through various media, and launches e.g. Project Launch. The first of two conferences is planned for 25 September 2003 and this will be focusing on equality in the workplace – this includes recruitment, progression, and implications of the project findings for both organisations within the three labour market sectors and the government departments and agencies that deal with these organisations. Through the Inter-Site Working Groups, mainstreaming of the Project's findings will be taking place on a continuous process and this, plus the Project's continuing liaison with the Equality Authority, will impact on equality and diversity in the workplace - both in terms of policies implemented, support structures put in place and training delivery.

The Project has also put considerable effort in 2002 into developing good relations with its transnational partners and with other EQUAL stakeholders.

Equal at Work is confident that its investment in the DP and in its other partnerships will pay dividends in 2003 and 2004, as results begin to emerge from the Project sites and to be disseminated and mainstreamed. We remain confident that the Project can lead to new insights into the role of HR policies and practices in supporting inclusion and equality in the workplace, and to new practices by Irish organisations in this regard.

ANNEX 1

EQUAL AT WORK DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP (DP)

As indicated in Chapter 1, the Equal at Work DP is made up of 49 partner organisations, namely:

- ❖ Trade Unions
 - SIPTU
 - IMPACT
 - ICTU
- ❖ Local Authorities
 - Dublin City Council
 - Sth. Dublin County Council
- ❖ Educational and Training Institutes
 - Dublin City University
 - NTDI
 - FAS
 - Irish Management Institute
 - National College of Ireland
 - Fastrack into Technology
 - Eastern Vocational Enterprise Ltd.
 - Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group
- ❖ Employers and Employer Organisations
 - Small Firms Association
 - Keelings
 - Sth. Dublin Chamber of Commerce
 - Tallaght Hospital
 - Gandon Enterprises
 - Northside Business Network
- ❖ Area Partnership Companies
 - Tallaght Partnership
 - Dublin Inner City Partnership
 - Northside Partnership
 - KWCD Partnership
 - Clondalkin Partnership
 - Blanchardstown Partnership
 - Finglas/Cabra Partnership
 - Southside Partnership
 - Rural Dublin LEADER Company
 - Ballymun Job Centre
 - Southside LES
 - Tallaght LES
- ❖ Statutory Bodies
 - Dublin City Enterprise Board
 - Dublin Port Company
 - Department of Social Community & Family Affairs
 - Local Government Management Services Board
- ❖ NGOs and Community Organisations
 - Exchange House Travellers Service
 - Forum of People with Disabilities
 - Co-operation Fingal
 - Focus Ireland
 - PARTAS
 - The Linkage Programme
 - Merchants Quay Ireland
 - Fingal Community Forum
 - Tallaght Welfare Society
 - Pavee Point
 - SICCDA
 - St. Michaels House Inclusive Recruitment
 - Integrating Ireland
 - INOU.

Note: It had originally been agreed that the private sector employer to undertake the job-rotation model – an objective of the Private Sector Site - would be Vodafone PLC. However, Vodafone withdrew from the Project in October 2002 (reasons for this remain unclear) and so attempts were ongoing over the period October - December to secure an employer willing to undertake the job-rotation model. This search was further hampered by the downturn in the economy. However, in December Keeling's, a warehouse and fruit distribution company, was approached and expressed an interest. Negotiations with Keeling's are ongoing but feedback to date has been very positive and it is expected that Keeling's will be on board in early January 2003.

ANNEX 2

PROJECT STAFF & CONTACT DETAILS

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ANNEX 3

MEMBERS OF DP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

- Philip O'Connor (Chair)
- Tom Brady (IMPACT)
- Niamh Byrne (Gandon Enterprises)
- Helen Campbell (Exchange House Travellers Service)
- David Connolly (Dublin Employment Pact Board of Management)
- Emer Coveney (Dublin Inner City Partnership)
- Declan Dunne (Clondalkin Partnership)
- Jane Forman (NTDI)
- Jennifer Hayes (Small Firms Association)
- Michael Hayes (SIPTU)
- Mary MacSweeney (Dublin City Council)
- Fiona Nolan (Northside Partnership)
- Chris O'Malley (Dublin City University)
- Marie Price Bolger (Tallaght Welfare Society)
- June Tinsley (INOUE)
- Caroline Creamer (Project Manager, Equal at Work)

ANNEX 4

TEMPLATE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLANS



1. Introduction

- What is the problem or challenge this goal is trying to overcome? (Start with a general description of the challenge and then become as precise as possible)
- What is the idea to do this?
- How is this idea new or innovative?
- How does this idea fit with the wider Equal at Work objectives of creating innovations in HR policies and practices to support disadvantaged groups?

2. Defining the End Outcomes

- Thinking ahead, what will the practical outputs of this goal be in Spring 2004?
- Which mainstream organisation(s) are likely to be interested in these outputs?
- Why will the outputs be interesting for the mainstream organisation(s)?
- In practical terms, what would you like to see change in mainstream organisations as a result of this goal?
- What methods do you think will be useful in transferring the outputs of this goal into changed practices, policies etc. in the mainstream organisation(s)?

3. Steps in the Project

- To undertake this goal successfully, list the key steps that need to occur
- Now list the actions that need to occur on a quarterly basis for these steps to take place. This applies to seven quarters, starting with Q3 (July-Sept) 2002.
- How will these actions be undertaken? (Describe the methods you will use)
- What will be the major milestones in the work to Spring 2004?

4. Actors and Roles

- List the people and organisations in the Working Group for this goal
- Looking at the steps, what organisations and people will need to be involved quarter by quarter?
- What will their roles be? (Who will do what in each quarter?)
- How will the work be organised? (Lead actor? Designated co-ordinator? Working group meetings? – how often? - where?)
- Will you need or use any project management technique?
- How will it be ensured that the people and organisations with defined roles actually undertake their assigned work, on time?

5. Reporting and Indicators

- What should we record or capture on this goal that will be of interest in 2004 when the project is being evaluated and mainstreamed, or if this work was being replicated somewhere else in a couple of years? (This may cover quantitative and qualitative measures -e.g. categorising participants in relation to the labour market beforehand, measuring progression, describing techniques used, describing barriers encountered etc.)
- Who in your Working Group will record this? How?
- What indicators can be used quarterly that will show the wider Site Committee and Equal at Work Monitoring Committee that progress is being made?
- Do you need any systems to record this?
- Have you checked with Caroline to ensure that the quarterly data she needs to make her returns to the WRC will be available for your goal?
- As well as these indicators, is there anything else needed to capture the ongoing *process* of implementation (and the difficulties) on a quarterly basis? (If you think a short written report would be a good way, what should be the headings?)
- Is there a dedicated person to keep minutes at Working Group meetings?

6. Gender Equality

- In what areas does gender equality impact on your goal?
- Can any data on the baseline positions of women and men in relation to this goal be generated?
- In each area, what actions will promote gender equality?
- Can you set any targets in relation to gender equality?

7. Transnationality

- How do you see transnationality as being relevant to this goal?
- Is there any specific partner or city that seems interesting from the perspective of this goal? (If you don't know, how will you find out?)
- What specific actions will you undertake to gain the benefits of the transnational dimension?
- Is there a particular visit you should go on, or an overseas partner you will want to meet here?
- What can you contribute to Equal at Work's transnational partners?

8. Finances

- How much money do you have for your goal? (For now, assume two-thirds of original allocation)
- Are you sure this is enough?
- Do you know of any other possible supplementary sources of funds?
- How will you allocate this money across the different actions?
- Who is responsible for ensuring the budget is managed correctly?

9. Risks to the Goal

- List the five main things you think could prevent the work for this goal being implemented effectively, within budget, on time, and producing interesting outputs.
- How will you ensure each of these does not happen?