

**PRESENTATION TO TRANSKOM MEETING
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In my presentation today I want to provide:

- an overview of work done in the EQUAL asylum seekers theme
- highlight some of the good practices developed in the first round of EQUAL
- look ahead to priorities in the second round

Within EQUAL the asylum seekers theme is relatively small accounting for some 5% of the ESF available and some 3% of approved Development Partnerships in the second round. All Member States are supporting asylum seeker activity in the second round. The asylum seekers theme in EQUAL is addressing some important issues that affect the socio-vocational integration of asylum seekers.

Second round activity

There are 64 DPs approved in the second round, more than in the first round. The increase is largely due to the participation of the 10 new member states in the second round.

We have undertaken an initial analysis of the priorities of the second round DPs. This shows that:

- most are addressing arrival and general support, education issues and capacity building
- around two thirds are tackling employment related issues
- about a fifth of DPs are also addressing issues about re-integration where asylum seekers receive negative decisions to their applications

Employment

Supporting asylum seekers into employment is of course a challenging process. In most member states, access to employment for asylum seekers is not allowed or severely limited. In this context DPs have worked hard to achieve success by concentrating their efforts to helping beneficiaries move closer to the labour market and provide relevant work experience that can be valuable for personal development. Actions to achieve this include:

- Creating opportunities for work experience, job placements, shadowing
- Building relations and networks with employers and employer organisations
- Skills audits and CVs
- Development of databases and other IT tools

Transnationality

Transnationality is a key principle of EQUAL. It is particularly important in the asylum seekers theme where there are relatively few DPs in individual member states. Through transnational activity, DPs have been able to:

- Develop contacts in other Member States to add a European dimension and the possibility for further co-operation
- Compare and contrast different approaches to find out what works well and what might be transferable
- Raise awareness of different national contexts and EU developments on asylum policy
- Facilitate the direct exchange of experience, methods and approaches
- Work with partners operating in similar contexts

Partnership

Given the complex issues dealt with in the asylum seekers theme strong and effective partnerships are essential to address cross-cutting issues which engage all the relevant stakeholders. Getting the right people involved from the outset and empowering them to act are key issues. Partnership is a complex issue and requires investment in resources to work effectively. Within the asylum seekers theme key issues in successful partnership development include:

- Ensuring that you involve in the partnership, people who can make decisions on behalf of the organisations they represent
- Ensuring partners are aware of the context in which asylum seeker work operates
- Agreeing clear and focussed work programmes specifying roles for individual partners, whilst being sufficiently flexible to respond to changing circumstances

Capacity building

Capacity building is about improving the quality of organisations that can support the needs of asylum seekers in terms of infrastructure, resources and awareness. DPs have supported a range of activities to help build capacity at various levels:

- Providing training for people in organisations who assist asylum seekers both in terms of the general context and for specific issues
- By supporting the creation of networks between partners and other actors to raise commitment and understanding
- Through the development of networking tools to help with the co-ordination of partner organisations and services
- Through awareness raising activities at community level and to raise awareness of the general public about asylum seeker needs

Advice, Education and Training

Providing advice education and training is an important pre-requisite in socio-vocational integration. As in the field of employment there can be restrictions on access for asylum seekers to forms of education and training. But often the provision of advice is the starting point to raise awareness of the opportunities that might be available.

Best practices in this area include:

- Language training combined with skills training allows language to be applied in a specific context and has been successfully used to accelerate learning and increase vocational competence
- Specialist training in areas where skills are in demand and where asylum seekers can make a particular contribution
- Skills audits and individually designed training programmes which meet the particular needs of beneficiaries
- Developing 'One-stop' advice services which enable clients to access a range of advice through a single point of access

Communication and networking

Using innovative approaches to communication and networking has proved extremely useful in keeping partners informed, advising other stakeholders about specific and general issues and helping to raise awareness amongst the general public.

Strategies adopted by DPs to address this have included:

- The use of networking tools and on-line databases to facilitate communication and co-ordination between partners and other groups
- Developing and implementing effective communication strategies from the start
- Using targeted media campaigns to raise awareness and increase visibility
- Involve policy makers to promote mainstreaming of good results

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is of course a core objective of EQUAL. The benefits of the good practices developed and validated through EQUAL will only be realised if policy makers and implementers can be persuaded to adopt them more widely. Mainstreaming is a challenging process because there is often resistance to change and concerted efforts are needed to make change possible. Actions which have been successful in promoting mainstreaming have included:

- Making early links with policy and decision makers at all levels; by engaging them at the outset in developments increases the potential commitment to change later on in the process
- Using the results of transnational co-operation can be effective in transferring good practice between countries. Where new approaches have been seen to work in different contexts increases the strength of argumentation when

proposing new approaches

- Using the National Thematic Networks (NTNs) to synthesise the key lessons.
For the asylum seekers theme this can mean working with NTNs in other themes to develop a critical mass
- The use of specifically targeted events to promote the transfer of good practice to key audiences

And finally the European Thematic Group (ETG5) will continue to support work in the asylum seekers theme by promoting and disseminating good practices and new approaches at all levels. As we move into the second round of EQUAL, the emphasis is clearly on mainstreaming and ensuring that new ideas and approaches tested under EQUAL are adopted widely.

I wish your transnational partnership every success in the future.