



Third Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL

Final report



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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CIP EQUAL	Community Initiative Programme EQUAL
CR	Czech Republic
TG	Target Group
EC	European Commission
EC	European Community
ESF	European Social Fund
ETG	European Thematic Groups
ECDB	EQUAL Common Database
EU	European Union
IS	Information System
HR	Human Resources
MRD	Ministry for Regional Development of the CR
MIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade of the CR
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the CR
MSSF	Monitoring System of Structural Funds
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MC	Monitoring Committee
MR	Monitoring Report
NGO	Non-Government Non-Profit Organisation
NSS	National Support Structure
NTN	National Thematic Networks
NTF	National Training Fund
OP	Operational Programme(s)
OP HRE	Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment
PWC	PriceWaterhouseCoopers
DP	Development Partnership(s)
MA	Managing Authority
SF	Structural Funds
TA	Technical Assistance
PS	Public Support
OCRG	Office of the Czech Republic Government

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Summary

Summary of Evaluation Context and Applied Methodology

The third phase of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL follows up with and further develops previous CIP EQUAL evaluating activities. Within this evaluation phase, the basic CIP EQUAL principles have been evaluated, i.e. innovation, mainstreaming, partnership, and empowerment. Concurrently, an evaluation of the programme implementation and of the impacts of CIP EQUAL available at the time of evaluation was completed.

Quantitative and qualitative-type data was used for the evaluation of CIP EQUAL. Both types of data were gathered in the course of desk research.

The first data type was acquired namely by converting the answers of respondents in two questionnaire surveys (141 and 25 respondents) to a numeric base. In addition, MSSF Monit data were utilised as quantitative data.

The acquired qualitative data were structured interviews with the representatives of DP, MA, NTN and NSS. Additional data resources included expert panels associated with individual evaluation topics. Finally, also verbal answers of respondents provided within the questionnaire surveys were used. The data obtained in such a manner were analysed within desk research, as well as by means of statistical methods.

Summary of CIP EQUAL Implementation and Administration

In the opinion of the evaluator of the third phase of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL, problems arising from the unclear and unspecific definition of activities and the overall, originally envisaged role of the NSS, as well as the insufficient understanding of the experimental nature of CIP EQUAL have manifested themselves more markedly during Action 2 and 3. The programming period 2007 – 2013 shall require a most precise formulation of the tasks and the possibilities of the MA to influence the entity fulfilling the role of a support structure in similar ESF funded programmes within the framework of a contract concluded with the programme MA. The aim is to improve and to clarify the environment of mutual relationships among the implementing entities of a particular programme. More intensive involvement of private legal entities (i.e. including non-profit organisations) in the implementation of ESF funded programmes seems a prospective possibility of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the expended funds provided that contractual provision is well adjusted and defined. In this respect, the MA should consider whether it wishes to intensify its guidance with regard to the NSS activities in the form of methodical guidelines (this could be also integrated in the contract) or whether to only rely on a specific scope of tasks defined in a contract with a private entity, which can never cover the overall complexity or the experience gained within the self execution of the programme. In this sense, the combination of fulfilling methodical guidelines within the framework of a contract may be a good solution.

Administration at the project level was viewed as rather problematic. It is therefore essential to simplify the administration of similar programmes and the submission of various basic documents for the purpose of technical and financial monitoring reports. This may be done

by mapping the necessary prerequisites with respect to the administration capacity of potential applicants prior to announcing the individual calls, and by drawing attention to these aspects while still in the course of project application preparation.

In the programming period 2007 – 2013, MA should specify analyses of personnel needs in their management manuals, which should be performed at six-month intervals at minimum and in the scope as specified in Chapter 5.3 of the CIP EQUAL Management Manual. Furthermore, MA should perform ongoing analyses, reviews and systematic sorting of methodologies, interpretations, guides, and guidelines in terms of their material content as well as up-to-datedness to ensure their compliance with the legislation valid in a specific period.

The settings of mainstreaming indicators are different compared to other traditional indicators of SF funded programmes. With a view to the fact that target values have not been determined and that specific indicator data are entered subsequently, it is rather difficult to evaluate the mainstreaming success rate due to the varying objectives of NTN. A key precondition for ongoing and high-quality mainstreaming monitoring is interpretation continuity with regard to individual indicators. Any change to the indicators and particularly to their interpretation in the course of data collection result in more or less inconsistent final data and in the reduced motivation of the entities that are to fulfil the same. Within data collection activities, the most severe problems encountered were concurrently associated with the interpretation of individual indicators at the programme level during their conversion from paper to electronic format.

Summary of Mainstreaming Principle Evaluation

As regards the definition of responsibility for practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle, the mainstreaming model based, in particular, on NTN and MA activities was applied in the Czech Republic even if the basic responsibility for mainstreaming at the national level is assumed by the MA. With a view to these findings, the CIP EQUAL MA shall be required to draw up framework agreements with other MA of ESF funded operational programmes in the programming period 2007 – 2013 concerning further publicity options, as well as the practical application of the currently validated innovation products at all policy levels.

On the part of MA, foreign experience in the area of innovation product validation and in the area of CIP EQUAL implementation, the NTN coordination group, long-term expert involvement in NTN, conference organisation, and the creation of a good and bad practice database were mainly deployed as mechanisms supporting the mainstreaming concept implementation. On the part of the NSS, continuous updates of the national mainstreaming strategy and the drawing up of reports on its implementation, the option of using the help line by DP representatives, methodical support within mainstreaming execution, and coordination of the NTN dealings and activities should be mentioned. The mechanisms applied by the DP depend on the character and the focus of the activities of a particular project. Within the framework of complex vertical mainstreaming, contacts to regional and national representatives through special products for potential co-operation of various institutions are used, however, the effectiveness of such activities is significantly impaired by problems in communication with individuals from the decision-making sphere and/or by a

conceivable unclear political situation, or by competing with other currently discussed and more relevant political topics.

As regards the DP, NTN and MA needs, the national mainstreaming strategy was continuously updated and adjusted to ensure its relevance with respect to their activities. The national mainstreaming strategy may be considered as a comprehensive strategy aspiring to include all substantial influence, processes and factors entering the mainstreaming process at the national level. In the new programme period 2007 – 2013, necessary conditions as well as an environment were established allowing to sustain the set CIP EQUAL activities at the national level. With respect to the already mentioned long-term complex nature of mainstreaming, an active involvement of the MA of ESF funded operational programmes in these networks is necessary.

The increased emphasis on vertical mainstreaming strategy coordination on the part of the MA in spring 2008 may be appraised positively as previous efforts aimed at process coordination at the NTN level were insufficient. In this sense, the MA will be required to carefully monitor, control, and to support the main vertical mainstreaming activities in the final phase of CIP EQUAL execution even though the responsibility for mainstreaming partial products will continue to lie on the individual DP.

From the DP support mechanisms analysed in the course of mainstreaming activities, increased support of methodical guidance and active MA involvement in mainstreaming at the programme level in 2008, a shift in the understanding of “on-site inspections” on the part of NSS, i.e. emphasis on the role of the inspector as a potential DP consultant and advisor, application of CIP EQUAL experience in the programme period 2007 – 2013 within the framework of HRE OP (national/programme mainstreaming level) and the telephone help line are namely considered as the most efficient. On the contrary, the relatively late processing of DP methodical guides and guidelines and the attempt to emphasise the regional dimension of NTN functioning are considered as less efficient.

National thematic networks are conceived fully in accordance with the thematic approach. They cover all the priority areas, whereas the DP are permanent members of NTN. Six NTN have been established in the CR. After launching the NTN and their securing on the part of the NSS, this arrangement proved as a very beneficial platform for information sharing and for the formation of thematic subgroups that would agree a joint procedure. In general, however, it is necessary to point to the fact that the situation in individual NTN differs significantly as the objectives of some NTN are rather wide-range and it was therefore not possible to unite all the DP involved in the performed activities.

Since the final quarter of 2007, products developed within CIP EQUAL have been validated and the main validation wave has taken place in the first quarter of 2008. Some DP, however, had almost no products validated by March 2008. This delay means that less time is left for mainstreaming. The currently completed validations are usually successful.

The DP should be aware that vertical mainstreaming represents a more long-term process and that some steps shall be performed at a time when they are no longer supported by CIP EQUAL funds. It will be necessary to use both formalised procedures and informal contacts with politicians and officials for the purpose of implementation of vertical mainstreaming. The most effective mechanisms for disseminating good practice particularly include coordination of vertical mainstreaming activities on the part of MA, long-term involvement

of experts in NTN activities, supporting the transfer of developed products to users, and comments of the CIP EQUAL MA concerning the preparation of the new generation of ESF programmes in the period 2007 – 2013.

The completed surveys demonstrated that DP and NTN largely apply the mainstreaming principle as targeted pressure on politicians and policy makers through disseminating examples of good practice and through passively making public its innovation activities (i.e. press, publications, brochures, guides, websites, etc.). Active methods of influencing these entities, in particular through their active involvement in problem-solving in the course of project execution and through direct and personal contact, are still deployed inadequately.

Summary of Partnership Principle Evaluation

The focus of the partnership principle evaluation was not only on the traditional appraisal of process-related partnership functioning arrangements, but the evaluators also analysed the many aspects of the current and potential impact of partnership and its types. The key objective was to assess the benefits of the partnership principle for the successful implementation of CIP EQUAL. The added value and the synergy effect of the partnership principle, as well as the efficiency and actual effectiveness of fulfilment were examined within evaluations.

It should be underlined that the experience of various institutions and organisations in the Czech Republic gained in relation to the execution of projects grounded on the partnership principle cannot be deemed significant. This is mainly due to historical development where the term "partnership" and its application in practice was unknown to different institutions involved in the solution of a common objective for a long period of time.

In the long term, CIP EQUAL aids various institutions in gaining experience from the execution of common objectives. The common execution of a project supports long-term co-operation among partners in successive periods and on additional tasks associated with the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities. The impacts of the programme and especially of the partnership principle are therefore more wide-scale and will probably manifest themselves after the programme termination by establishing new partnerships in the CR based on other and not only the project platforms. The partnership principle aids in the sharing of information among the involved institutions and in their mutual co-operation. Thus, it also facilitates the fulfilment of other principles. The impact with the best evaluation from DP is the impact on innovations.

The completed analyses imply that in general, the change in the partner structure would not significantly affect the progress of development of innovation products in most cases, and that the present DP composition is sufficient for the fulfilment of all CIP EQUAL requirements. As regards the partnership structure, it is not possible to say that there is a general formula for creating an ideal partnership or with respect to the structure of individual thematic areas. The DP success rate is largely dependent on the initiative of individual DP members and their willingness to co-operate.

The vast majority of institutions involved in the DP are fully satisfied with the configuration of the DP decision-making mechanisms and/or they have no reservations to the same. Concurrently, however, it was ascertained that a quarter of the partner organisations do not

take an active part in the decision-making process even if they have the possibility to do so. The evaluator is convinced that this casts certain doubts on the fulfilment of the partnership principle and that such cases constitute (partial) co-operation among institutions. A passive approach to the decision-making process was namely observed among public administration institutions. Furthermore, the completed analyses evidence that the continuously growing experience in applying the partnership principle in the Czech Republic positively support the intensity of communication and the art of co-operation.

The project paperwork, the submission of monitoring reports and the financial inflexibility associated therewith are still considered by the DP as the major and the most frequently encountered problems within the fulfilment of the partnership principle. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the situation is better than at the beginning of the functioning of CIP EQUAL. This is due to the growing experience of the individual DP members and particularly of their leaders. Other, even if less significant, obstacles include a lack of previous experience, incomparable expertise of individual partners or their motivation to co-operate.

Experience indicates that a large number of partners involved in a project may lead to problems in mutual coordination of activities and promotion of innovation. In DP with more members, a marked coherence with the passive approach of some partners was demonstrated. Involvement of all types of organisations whose involvement is crucial in terms of solving a particular problem at a regional or sectoral level is indeed important for the future establishment of DP. Partnership termination on the part of one or more DP partners may be denoted as an additional obstacle to fulfilling the partnership principle, especially in the case of partners performing key activities.

The success rate and the long-term sustainability of partnership outcomes are influenced by the form of partnership execution and the intensity of participation of partners. Higher participation brings about longer sustainability of the partnership outcomes. Nevertheless, it is more demanding on the organisational and communication abilities of the head organisation. From this point of view, progress is apparent in the Czech Republic where weight is gradually shifting from a centralised to a decentralised form of partnership. It is particularly obvious in the willingness of a number of DP organisations to co-operate with institutions, which they originally considered as their competitors. The decentralised form of decision-making is quite significant when deciding in the long-term as it may reduce the costs associated with the implementation of a decision, and the decision itself is applied into practice faster.

Immense added value to the partnership lies in building and strengthening confidence among organisations. To create a development team in the area of integration of disadvantaged groups on the labour market, which is the case of most EQUAL projects, is a complex process and it takes some time. For this reason, experience from the 1st round of CIP EQUAL, as well as other actions and programmes, which gave rise to numerous partnerships and many institutions had the opportunity to gain their first experience in executing the common objective of multiple institutions. In the opinion of the evaluator, CIP EQUAL shall have a similar effect in the programming period 2007 – 2013, to which the good mutual experience of partners (and/or whole DP) may be transferred, and the partnerships adjusted in this manner may continue in the commenced development of new products.

Summary of Empowerment Principle Evaluation

The objective of the empowerment principle is to support excluded groups of individuals in assuming responsibility for and control over their lives. At the same time, it is aimed at changing the system and approaches and at allowing disadvantaged groups to participate on the labour market and society.

DP often brings a coalescence of the empowerment of target group representatives with their involvement in the DP activities. The fact that target groups are the subject of care or other actions is not necessarily associated with their actual scope of involvement in decisions on further development and innovation tool application. In this respect, qualitative innovation was not observed and it seems that in case of common decision-making, initiative lies almost fully on the DP head organisation. Most partners receive basic documents on beneficiaries following a discussion and with partial changes (or without them), or they secure partial basic documents.

The empowerment principle is closely associated with the innovation principle as the programme combines employment strategy with the strategy for eliminating social exclusion and this is a challenging task requiring a new way of thinking and approaches. Compared to Action 1, almost a half of the DP utilise one of the forms of target group involvement. In most cases, however, involvement and/or other kinds of participation in the results, activities and products are deployed instead of empowerment. Nonetheless, involvement of target groups in empowerment was achieved in our opinion, whereas their independence was valued the most. Unlike the second phase of ongoing evaluation, during which the involvement of target groups in the decision-making process was viewed more as a formality, the present evaluation phase allows us to identify the most successful forms of involvement through which individual DP partners and target groups participated in decision-making.

The evaluating activity outcome implies a growing interest of the DP in the actual involvement of target groups and their ability to activate target group members, to recognise the target group needs, and to respond to them directly. Apparently, the interest of target groups is dependent on their motivation, direct communication with them and on an individual approach. The development of innovation tools within the framework of project management is aided by both regular comments from the DP partners and the involvement of target groups. This is beneficial for a DP where empowerment is viewed as a product, namely in the form of methodical materials and educational programmes. Empowerment contributes positively to the application of the partnership principle – in terms of the partnership scope as well as depth. It simultaneously affects the development of innovation tools and prospects with regard to successful mainstreaming.

Consultations represented the prevailing level of involvement of target groups. Delegation of responsibility as the supreme form of involvement of target groups in project execution was utilised by minimum DP. Almost all the approached DP members considered the influence of target groups on the success of mainstreaming as beneficial or very beneficial. Moreover, empowerment had a positive effect on the development of innovation tools. Even though target group representatives receive information and review submitted proposals, they mostly are not active decision makers. This, however, does not usually apply to well-functioning non-profit organisations with a sufficient number of personnel, which bring

together members of target groups and have their professional representatives in a DP. Based on an analysis of variance, we may confirm that statistically most significant differences among NTN may be found in the area of target group representation, access to information resources, and involvement transparency. These three viewpoints represent the major differences among NTN.

In all examined DP, partners are able to directly participate in empowerment, i.e. by participating in workgroups and the DP MA. An alternative option includes partner involvement through a DP assembly. Whereas the ultimate decision usually lies on the beneficiary receiving support. This situation is understandable because it is the beneficiary who, based on a contractual relationship with the support provider, bears all the risks associated with the project execution. Within the decision-making process, the approaches of individual partners to their participation in the DP are quite interesting. In the first case, the partners perceive DP objectives comprehensively and they approach them accordingly. Quite the opposite is the approach where partners focus solely on partial solutions that are associated with their tasks within the fulfilment of individual activities. The third approach, which is minor in terms of relevance, is an approach where the fulfilment of project objectives is lateral for partners and they consider the project as an “order” – thus, we may speak of a strong financial motive. Nevertheless, the first approach where partners understand their role in a project within an overall DP context prevails. This indicates a marked, circumstantial positive effect of CIP EQUAL execution where the commitment to achieve project objectives predominates over a purely business approach.

It is possible to affirm that within individual DP, the empowerment principle is viewed at two levels as regards decision-making at the target group level, i.e. at the level of direct and indirect target group participation. As to indirect participation, the empowerment principle is fulfilled through partners representing the target groups within the framework of project management. As to direct participation of target groups in decision-making, the empowerment principle is fulfilled through participation at conferences, in dissemination and through involvement in objection mechanisms prior to, during, or after ending their participation in project activities. These mechanisms are namely based on questionnaire surveys targeted at DP and on individual consultations of mentors and consultants with a target group.

Most DP are grounded on previous co-operation of key partners. According to the questionnaire survey results, the most common activities included joint projects (62%), joint information campaigns (55%), as well as co-operation within the framework of tool application and implementation of active employment policy measures (35 %). Only 3% of the respondents indicated that they had not co-operated with partners prior to executing projects within CIP EQUAL.

Summary of the Evaluation of Currently Available Impacts at the Level of the Czech Republic

A general objective of CIP EQUAL is to develop and promote new tools for fighting all forms of discrimination and inequalities on the labour market with the help of international co-operation. The outcome should thus be a reduction of existing obstacles and support of all

disadvantaged groups facing discrimination or unequal treatment, either in employment or during the search for it.

A basic precondition for fulfilling the above objective is the transfer of new procedures and tools developed in individual projects into the “real world”, in accordance with policies implemented at national and regional levels. The results of the transfer of individual products and innovative procedures in relevant legislation and public policies were analysed in the section dedicated to impacts.

The evaluation of impacts was performed by means of gathering responses to the following four questions:

- How far did the Programme results lead to provable changes in relevant policies?
- What are specific proofs of results at both the programme level and individual theme level?
- What is the degree of the effect of the identified changes when fighting discrimination and inequalities on the labour market?
- What is the degree of sustainability of such changes after the programme ends?

Answering the above questions presumed the finding of specific proof of the influence of CIP EQUAL outcomes on relevant policies. Such proof was searched for at two qualitative levels. The first level represented direct references in relevant documents to the findings acquired during the execution of CIP EQUAL projects (e.g. explanatory reports to legal acts). The second level represented information gathered from individual project executors and relevant location employees participating in public policy formulation.

The incompleteness of Action 3 and an insufficient time interval from the completion of individual projects had a negative effect on the impact evaluation. In general, the individual development partnerships did not have enough time to secure the transfer of developed products to practice.

Despite the above mentioned insufficient time interval, 11 impacts of the projects supported within CIP EQUAL on six relevant public policy areas have been identified. No impact has been determined only in the case of Task 5.02 Process-Oriented Public Policy Impact. In one event, however, the effect of CIP EQUAL may be only considered as supportive because the subject change was discussed regardless of the existence of CIP EQUAL, and it concerned distribution of competences among employment bureaus and labour inspectorates. Some of the impacts have not yet acquired the form of a specific legislation change. They mainly concern the establishment and the functioning of a social enterprise and the introduction of the paternity leave. It is therefore possible to state that CIP EQUAL has brought 8 “full-value” impacts on the public policy area so far.

Based on the completed impact analysis, the following conclusion may be formulated:

- A majority of the implemented changes are of a partial nature and they cannot influence the overall situation on the labour market. Positive impacts, however, may also be expected with certain specific groups: in the case of persons with a reduced working capacity, this chiefly includes considering their individual needs in the educational system (career consulting) and in their working life (employment

preparation institute), and introducing tax eligibility for transportation costs with employers in the case of persons travelling to work.

- Only a part of the identified impacts constitutes the transfer of a developed product to public policies. The remaining part was the result of objection procedures or in the course of NTN work.
- With a view to the inadequate time interval, an assessment of the efficiency of the implemented changes to relevant policies may be made only at a general level.
- Most of the implemented changes are sustainable as they do not present a problem either in the legal or fiscal areas.

Based on the completed analyses, the following recommendations may be formulated:

- An evaluation of the impacts of programmes sharing the same philosophy with CIP EQUAL should be performed at a substantially longer time interval. An interval of 3 years from the termination of Action 3 is recommended.
- While working with individual products, it is necessary to continuously monitor two groups of individuals from the same target group. The developed product/tool shall be applied to one group and none to the other. Subsequently, the impacts of the subject tool may be compared and the “base line scenario” may thus be eliminated. An evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed measures shall be significantly more objective. This procedure should become the preconditions for a successful validation procedure.
- When similar programmes are conceived in the future, their narrower focus is advisable. When looking at the thematic focus of individual projects and the individual impacts, the wide spread scope of CIP EQUAL will undoubtedly stand out. This will simplify expert monitoring of individual outputs, as well as subsequent impact evaluations.

Table 1: Impacts on Legislation and Relevant Policies Identified by 30 June 2008

Evaluation area	Draft legislation amendment	Project name	Supported within measures	Impact	Note
5.01	Transposition of experience in working with the physically disabled, which integrates the employment preparation institute for persons with physical disabilities in Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family	7.1 Supporting the introduction of flexible work and modern employment methods – an option particularly for women	National	Executed through NTN A
5.01	Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009 – allocation of funds for measures aimed at preparing sight-impaired individuals for entry on the labour market	The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society	4.3 Reducing the differences in the assertion of women and men on the labour market in the areas of Objective 1	Regional	Executed within objection procedure
5.03	Distribution of competences among employment bureaus and labour inspectorates in the area of labour market supervision	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family	7.1 Supporting the introduction of flexible work and modern employment methods – an option particularly for women	National	
5.03	Changes to the “Employment Agency Programme”	Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring	6.2 Programme for integrating employees of large companies dismissed during restructuring	Regional	
5.04	Implementation of the career consultant institute in Act No. 561/2004 Coll.	Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged on the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation	1.3 Supporting the integration of persons with physical disabilities in the open labour market	National	
5.04	Draft complementing the amendment of the Act on Social Services Act and associated decrees. Extension of the offer of educational courses by adding the topic of social service management.	Development of social services	2.3 Enhancing social economy (third sector) and namely community services with focus on increasing job quality in the areas of Objective 1	National	
5.05	Social Enterprise Act – basic documents	Employment and educational programme for clients of the Halfway House in Velký Dvůr near Pohořelice	2.3 Enhancing social economy (third sector) and namely community services with focus on increasing job quality in the areas of Objective 1	National	Basic documents processed within NTN C

5.06	Draft amendment and recommendations concerning the newly formulated legislation on paternity leave for the MoLSA	The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society	4.3 Reducing the differences in the assertion of women and men on the labour market in the areas of Objective 1	National	
5.07	Introduction of teleworking	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family	7.1 Supporting the introduction of flexible work and modern employment methods – an option particularly for women	National	
5.07	Introduction of the option of the tax eligibility of costs expended on travelling to work by employees	Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family	7.1 Supporting the introduction of flexible work and modern employment methods – an option particularly for women	National	
	Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, and Act No. 48/1997 Coll., on public medical insurance – amendment of mobile specialist palliative home care	It is normal to die at home	2.3 Enhancing social economy (third sector) and namely community services with focus on increasing job quality in the areas of Objective 1	National	

Source: Own processing

1 Methodology

1.1 Introduction¹

You are holding a draft 2008 Evaluation Report of the “Third Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL” dated to 30 September 2008.

The text integrates queries and comments received by the team in the course of project execution. Thereby, the evaluation team was able to evaluate the current state of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic.

This Interim Report on the “Third Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL” follows up with other project documents, i.e. the Inception Report, 2007 Evaluation Report, or the Working Interim Report of March 2008. Furthermore, the text provides detailed information on the evaluated themes, the methods of acquiring relevant data and information, their processing methods, as well as the form of output presentation.

In the course of the project execution, a number of outputs were gathered in the form of information collected through desk research, questionnaire surveys, structured interviews, and MSSF Monit data. The key project outputs are specified in the summary, as well as in individual chapters hereof dedicated to the evaluation of particular principles.

In many aspects, the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL implemented in the Czech Republic (hereinafter referred to as “CIP EQUAL”) is an exceptional programme. It differs from other programmes namely by its principles on which it is built. These principles are:

- Thematic approach,
- Partnership,
- Empowerment,
- Transnational co-operation,
- Innovation,
- Mainstreaming,
- Gender mainstreaming.

Within the framework of the implemented “Third Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of CIP EQUAL” project, the partnership, empowerment, innovation, and mainstreaming principles were evaluated. The evaluation of the impact of CIP EQUAL at the Czech Republic level was included as the fifth evaluation area.

The first call within the EQUAL Community Initiative was announced in 2001 in the Czech Republic. Then, it was still funded from the PHARE programme. Another call for proposals for projects followed in 2004 and 2007.

¹ The draft evaluation report was not subject to stylistic or editorial revision.

Even though CIP EQUAL is a programme which will formally end by the end of 2008, a number of experiences as well as principles resulting from the programme will also be usable in successive periods.

In the Czech Republic, CIP EQUAL has already been subject to two evaluations in the previous years. The “First Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of CIP EQUAL” evaluation project was executed in the course of the years 2005 and 2006. The evaluation focused on reviewing the suitability and relevance of the selected strategy, on appraising the control, implementation and monitoring system at the level of the Managing Authority (hereinafter also referred to as the “MA”), as well as at the level of Development Partnerships (hereinafter referred to as “DP”). Furthermore, the progress of creating DP and transnational co-operation were evaluated.

The “Second Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL” took place in 2006. The evaluation focused on the impacts of the first round of CIP EQUAL, on an assessment of the implementation and monitoring systems, on an appraisal of the thematic approach, on the fulfilment of the key principles of CIP EQUAL, as well as on DP self-evaluation.

Some of the conclusions contained in the evaluation results are eye-opening also with a view to the implementation of the “Third Phase of Evaluation of CIP EQUAL” project. This namely concerns the parts that are also associated with this project. In this case, the implementers follow up with the conclusions and recommendations ascertained by the evaluators of previous evaluation projects.

1.2 Evaluation Objective

CIP EQUAL is both specific and exceptional with respect to a number of its principles. From this point of view, the objective of the implemented project shall be the evaluation of the functioning of the principles typical for CIP EQUAL and the use of such experience, as well as the option of transferring the acquired experience to other programmes.

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

The Interim Report describes, among other things, the implementation procedure applicable to the evaluation project. It contains the procedures, methodology, schedules, and evaluation execution methods, including information resources.

The “Third Phase of Evaluation of CIP EQUAL” is divided into five fundamental tasks:

- Innovation principle evaluation,
- Mainstreaming principle evaluation,
- Partnership principle evaluation,
- Empowerment principle evaluation,
- Evaluation of available impacts on the labour market.

These five fundamental tasks are further divided into subthemes and partial evaluation activities detailed in the tables below. In total, the evaluation is divided into 80 evaluation tasks.

Theme No. 1: Innovation Principle Evaluation

Sub-theme	Activity code	Activity
1.01 Evaluation of innovation development	1.01A	Ascertaining what new products or processes appeared with respect to the current state of the relevant public programme intervention area, sector or region.
	1.01B	Verifying whether adequate innovation development and identification procedures are implemented within DP.
1.02 Identification of the positive factors of innovation tool development in CIP EQUAL	1.02A	Identifying factors the occurrence of which during project management and implementation aided in the development of innovation tools.
	1.02B	Identifying factors which exist in the external environment of the project implementers, the occurrence of which resulted in the development of innovation tools.
	1.02C	Ascertaining whether the development of innovation tools was positively affected by the duration of the project implementation.
	1.02D	Ascertaining whether the development of innovation tools was positively affected by the existence of support tools and documents mediated by the Managing Authority.
1.02 Identification and appraisal of factors inhibiting innovation tool development in CIP EQUAL	1.03A	Identifying factors the occurrence of which during project management and implementation inhibited the development of innovation tools or reduced their efficiency.
	1.03B	Identifying factors which exist in the external environment of the implemented projects and inhibit the development of innovation tools and/or reduce their efficiency.
1.01 Evaluation of innovation quality	1.04A	Ascertaining whether the identified innovation is based on a conclusive and thorough analysis of the discrimination causes.
	1.04B	Ascertaining whether the identified innovation corresponds to the focus of the particular project and to the potential options of resolving discrimination causes with the aid of the particular project.
	1.04C	Determining the efficiency of the benefits resulting from the identified innovation when resolving the existing discrimination causes.
	1.04D	Assessing to what level and in what manner the new proposed solutions are more suitable for resolving existing problems compared to the existing and already applied policies and approaches to their solution.
	1.04E	Assessing to what level the proposed solutions are further applicable in terms of fund availability from the moment when CIP EQUAL funds are no longer available.
	1.04F	Assessing the level of interest among involved entities within and outside DP to assume the proposed solutions and what mechanisms were introduced to support the assumption of the relevant solutions.

Theme No. 2: Mainstreaming Evaluation

Sub-theme	Activity code	Activity
2.01 Description of problems associated with the implementation and monitoring system within the framework of Action 2 and 3 plus solution	2.01A	Ascertaining what major problems and obstacles appeared in the course of Action 2 and 3 in terms of the MA, NSS and DP activity.
2.02 Description indicating whether the administrative system, procedure and personnel capacity settings correspond to the optimum implementation progress	2.02A	Analysing whether the administrative system, procedure and personnel capacity settings correspond to the requirement for the optimum implementation progress.
2.03 Comparison of activities of selected NSS in other EU countries with NSS activities in the CR	2.03A	Comparing to what rate the NSS activities in the CR and other EU member states are relevant and efficient.
	2.03B	Assessing the innovation of the NSS activities implemented in the CR.
	2.03C	Ascertaining activities that have not been implemented so far on the part of the Czech NSS despite their suitability.
2.04 Description of the interpretation of the mainstreaming concept	2.04A	Ascertaining how the mainstreaming concept was interpreted by the individual CIP EQUAL entities in the CR.
2.04 Description of the mechanisms created to implement the mainstreaming concept	2.05A	Ascertaining what mechanisms were created to implement the mainstreaming concept in the CR.
2.06 Evaluation of the mainstreaming strategy at the programme level	2.06A	Appraising the relevance, comprehensiveness, feasibility, and sustainability of the mainstreaming strategy created at the national level.
2.07 Description and evaluation of monitoring tools	2.07A	Appraising what tools were developed at the programme level to monitor the progress of implementation of the mainstreaming strategy and their relevance and reliability.
2.08 Description and transfer to policies and actual practice	2.08A	Ascertaining the method of securing transfer to policies and actual practice (i.e. Action 3).
	2.08B	Verifying the link between the call for applications for financial support within Action 3 and the chosen selection mainstreaming strategy criteria specified at the DP level.
2.09 Evaluation of Development Partnership support mechanisms	2.09A	Ascertaining the DP support mechanisms when performing horizontal and vertical mainstreaming activities and verifying their efficiency.
	2.09B	Verifying to what level such mechanisms supported the quality of the DP mainstreaming strategies.

2.10 Description and evaluation of the Development Partnership strategy	2.10A	Ascertaining what elements and tools constitute the DP mainstreaming strategies and to what rate they focus on activities other than passive dissemination.
2.11 Description and evaluation of the National Thematic Network (NTN)	2.11A	Ascertaining what NTN were established, who they represent, what their role is, and how their activities are organized.
	2.11B	Verifying NTN efficiency within the framework of fulfilling their tasks.
	2.11C	Verifying the factors that simplify NTN activities or the appearing obstacles.
2.12 Description and appraisal of the good practice evaluation and validation mechanisms	2.12A	Ascertaining the mechanisms introduced at the programme level for the purpose of good DP practice appraisal and validation.
	2.12B	Appraising to what rate the validation of good practice was based on common documents.
	2.12C	Appraising to what level these mechanisms secure the relevance of the particular practice for national as well as regional policies.
2.13 Description of vertical mainstreaming mechanisms	2.13A	Ascertaining what mechanisms were introduced to disseminate good practice in the areas of employment policy and social inclusion at the programme level.
	2.13B	Assessing the delimitation of target groups and the persons included in such target groups.
2.13 Assessment of vertical mainstreaming mechanisms	2.14A	Assessing the relevance of the dissemination mechanisms for generating influence on policy-makers and their efficiency up to the moment of this evaluation.
	2.14B	Identifying and appraising the factors enhancing the influence or any appearing obstacles.
2.13 Description of interim mainstreaming results	2.15A	Ascertaining the results of vertical and horizontal mainstreaming at the time of evaluation.

Theme No. 3: Partnership Principle Evaluation

Sub-theme	Activity code	Activity
3.01 Assessment of the benefits of the partnership principle with respect to the successful implementation of CIP EQUAL	3.01A	Ascertaining to what level the partnership principle contributes to the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities.
	3.01B	Ascertaining to what level the partnership principle reinforces/adds to the efficiency of other principles (empowerment, innovation, mainstreaming).
	3.01C	Assessing to what level the partnership principle is being successfully fulfilled within the programme implementation.

Theme No. 4: Empowerment Principle Evaluation

Sub-theme	Activity code	Activity
4.01 Assessment of the benefits of implementation of the empowerment principle with respect to the successful implementation of CIP EQUAL and assessment of the various approaches to the empowerment principle implementation	4.01A	Ascertaining whether there is any new development in the method of empowerment implementation.
	4.01B	Identifying the best forms of involving persons and groups in strategy creation and preparation and in the individual phases of strategy implementation.
	4.01C	Ascertaining the different methods of partner/person/target group involvement across thematic fields.
	4.01D	Ascertaining how these different methods affected activity objectives and the fulfilment of these objectives.
	4.01E	Ascertaining to what level all the actors were able to participate in acquiring experience, learning and decision-making.
	4.01F	Ascertaining the reasons for the inactivity of some of the partners within the framework of DP.

Theme No. 5: Evaluation of Currently Available Impacts at the CR Level

	Activity code	Activity
5.01 Description and assessment of the impact on public policies	5.01A	Ascertaining to what level the CIP EQUAL results lead to provable changes in the employment, social inclusion and antidiscrimination policies at national, regional and local levels.
	5.01B	Identifying specific documents on results at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.01C	Assessing the effect which the identified changes may have when fighting discrimination and inequalities on the labour market.
	5.01D	Assessing the limitation of the effects of the changes identified while combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market.
	5.01E	Assessing to what level such changes are sustainable after CIP EQUAL ends.
5.02 Description and appraisal of process-oriented impacts on public policies	5.02A	Assessing to what level the CIP EQUAL results lead to provable changes in the process of public policy creation at the national, regional and local level.
	5.02B	Identifying the documents that prove these changes at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.02C	Assessing to what level these changes may likely result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market.
	5.02D	Ascertaining the potential limitations with respect to the possible changes.
	5.02E	Assessing the sustainability of these changes.
5.03 Description and assessment of institutional impacts on the labour market	5.03A	Assessing to what level the programme results lead to provable changes in mediation institutions on the labour market.
	5.03B	Identifying specific documents on these changes at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.03C	Assessing to what level these changes may likely result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what their potential limitations are.
	5.03D	Assessing the sustainability of these changes.
5.04 Description and assessment of institutional impacts with respect to education and professional preparation	5.04A	Ascertaining to what level the programme results lead to provable changes in education systems and professional preparation systems.
	5.04B	Identifying specific documents on these changes at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.04C	Assessing to what level these changes may likely result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what their potential limitations are.

	5.04D	Assessing the sustainability of these changes.
5.05 Description and assessment of institutional impacts in the area of business creation	5.05A	Ascertaining to what level the programme results lead to provable changes in the structures, processes and measures aimed at supporting the creation of entrepreneurial entities (businesses).
	5.05B	Identifying specific documents on these changes at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.05C	Assessing to what level these changes may likely result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what their potential limitations are.
	5.05D	Assessing the sustainability of these changes.
5.06 Description and assessment of institutional impacts within the regulatory framework	5.06A	Ascertaining to what level the programme results lead to provable changes in regulatory employment measures (collective agreements or laws).
	5.06B	Identifying specific documents on these results at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.06C	Assessing to what level these changes may likely result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what their potential limitations are.
	5.06D	Assessing the sustainability of these changes.
5.07 Description and assessment of organizational impacts on the employer	5.07A	Ascertaining to what level the programme results lead to provable changes in the HR management and development policies including employee recruitment, remuneration charts, approach to training and professional growth, as well as employment types.
	5.07B	Assessing to what level they contributed to changes in the structure of individual job types and in the approaches of various groups to the same.
	5.07C	Assessing to what rate they contributed to antidiscrimination policies and monitoring.
	5.07D	Identifying specific documents on these results at both the programme level and individual theme level.
	5.07E	Assessing to what level these changes may likely result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what their potential limitations are.
	5.07F	Assessing the sustainability of these changes.

The following chapters of the on-going Report provide a detailed description of the methods for acquiring and processing data and information, as well as the form of output presentation.

The methodical approach was grounded on collecting and analysing relevant data and information. Whereas qualitative as well as quantitative data were collected. Based on these data, an analysis was performed in the relevant thematic evaluations. The specific procedures, if different or widened in case of particular evaluations, are indicated in the following chapters hereof.

With regard to the specific evaluation objectives and the character of CIP EQUAL as a whole, a combined qualitative and quantitative evaluation was effected. Information and data were acquired with the aid of the following methods within the framework of qualitative evaluation:

- Desk research,
- Questionnaire survey,
- Structured interviews with the representatives of DP, MA, NSS, etc.,
- Telephone interviews based on structured questions,
- Expert panel with the DP and MA representatives.

The following was namely evaluated within the quantitative approach:

- Data acquired from ECDB,
- Relevant MSSF Monit indicators,
- Quantifiable data acquired from DP technical monitoring reports, grant decisions, etc.

Based on the acquired information and data, the following was performed:

- Comparative analyses,
- Data synthesis and recommendation formulation,
- Case study processing,
- Statistical analyses.

The selected methodological procedures differed in individual project phases according to current needs and the evaluated principles. Initially, the activities included activities connected with the commencement of the evaluation project (desk research – analyses of relevant available literature, collection and analysis of data associated with Czech DP, ECDB data analysis, MSSF Monit analysis, etc.). These were followed by questionnaire surveys conducted through an interactive web interface and structured interviews with the DP, MA and NSS representatives, and telephone interviews. The choice of questions and respondents made in connection with the evaluation outputs (an explicit link between the defined

questions and outputs) was complemented continuously as required by the individual execution phases.

1.4 Desk Research

The desk research method is a method of quickly acquiring a wide range of information. It is based on a comparison of the state of relevant documents before the CIP EQUAL implementation and their present state. The analysis was performed at the level of:

- Strategic documents (e.g. National Lisbon Programme 2005 – 2008² , National Employment Action Plan, etc.);
- Legal acts (e.g. Employment Act, Labour Code, etc.);
- Programme documents (e.g. operational programmes for the new programming period, small and medium sized enterprise support programme documents, documents relating to programmes implemented within the framework of an active employment policy, etc.);
- Sub-legal acts (especially decrees conditioning, for example, the procedural aspects of wage bargaining, allocating subsidies to newly established entrepreneurial entities, etc.);
- Expert studies (e.g. previous CIP EQUAL evaluations at both the CR and EU levels, etc. – see bibliography).

During these activities, the expert team also focused on an analysis of available literature dealing with the issues of the evaluated topics so that the subject of research is processed in accordance with the current understanding of the terminology.

Documents mapping the DP composition and activities, continuous fulfilment of CIP EQUAL by individual DP, etc. were collected through an analysis of basic data. Available primary data as well as indicators relating to the fulfilment of the evaluated CIP EQUAL principles were obtained therefrom. The basic data analysis also provided a source of information for conducting interviews with the key actors.

The basic analysis comprises two parts:

- Analysis of basic programme documents

This part summarises the basic preconditions and facts necessary for the implementation of CIP EQUAL.

- Analysis of basic data

In this phase, the basic data include “data” concerning individual DP. The currently available information within the framework of technical monitoring and financial reports and the rate of fulfilment of the monitoring indicators and ECDB data were mainly used.

² http://www.mfcr.cz/cps/rde/xchg/mfcr/hs.xsl/eu_program_zprava.html

These resources were sorted in a manner clearly showing what documents will be used by the expert team for the particular evaluation type.

Desk research was performed throughout the project execution. However, the most intensive work on this method took place in mid 2007.

1.5 Questionnaire Surveys

Significant data required for the evaluation analysis set up were acquired through a web questionnaire which mapped the major problematic areas within the implementation of CIP EQUAL Action 2 and 3. The questionnaire was conceived in a manner ensuring that the completion of the questionnaire by respondents was as easy as possible. When formulating the questions, effort was exerted to ensure that the respondents would not be forced to provide verbal answers (i.e. only to a small extent) and that the majority of the questions would be closed questions where the respondents would choose from pre-defined options.³ Based on this approach, it was possible to sufficiently evaluate the questionnaire survey results. In addition, adequate space was provided for verbal comments with selected questions.

The web questionnaire was conceived in a manner allowing the generation of a data cross-file in order to perform a regressive analysis of the completed answers and not only to obtain results related to specific questions. For example, this provided an option of pairing answer types according to different answers (i.e. how they affect the application of the results by DP based on the place of execution of the DP activities). Moreover, this kind of survey result processing limited the risk of errors caused by the processing of submitted answers.

The drawing-up of the questionnaire was effected in several phases. In the first phase, a draft questionnaire was drawn up and subsequently consulted with and adjusted according to the comments of the contracting authority. A pilot study was performed using the modified questionnaire, following which the final version of the questionnaire was drawn up.

Due to its anticipated higher return rate, the questionnaire was designed in an interactive and user-friendly form and placed in electronic format on the implementer's website. Where a questionnaire survey was not feasible, information was acquired by structured interviews. The questionnaire survey questions were chosen in a manner enabling the evaluation team to avoid subjective answers from the respondents and ensuring that the questionnaire survey outputs would be as objective as possible.

In the case of theme No. 5, the web questionnaire solely represented an additional source of information. Namely the representatives of individual DP were approached with the aim of obtaining information on their involvement in the formulation of relevant public policies.

³ With optional comments.

The questionnaire was divided into partial parts as specified below to facilitate an easier evaluation:

- Organisation characteristics,
- Questions concerning CIP EQUAL impacts,
- Questions concerning innovation,
- Questions concerning mainstreaming,
- Questions concerning partnership,
- Questions concerning empowerment.

Questionnaire surveys were conducted from the 14th of January until the 14th of February. The questionnaire surveys were originally presumed to end on the 1st of February, however, in order to obtain a more relevant sample, the deadline was postponed by 2 weeks.⁴

Partners from 71 DP were largely contacted by e-mail, in particular in two phases ensuring that responses would be obtained from a greater number of respondents. In the first phase, 544 organisations from functioning as well as merged DP were approached. Within second contact, the contact database was adjusted according to MSSF Monit and the following groups of respondents were excluded:

- Respondents who completed the questionnaire,
- Respondents who did not receive the original request due to a non-existent address,
- Respondents who advised that they were no longer participating in the particular partnership,
- Respondents who advised that they would not complete the questionnaire due to time or other reasons.

After making these corrections, the number of approached organisations was reduced quite significantly, i.e. a total of 163 respondents were approached in the second phase.

Along with the partners, also the leaders of all 71 DP were approached. If we add up all the approached respondents, the total number is 615. In the period under review, i.e. from 14 January 2008 until 14 February 2008, a total of 114 completed questionnaires were collected which, when converted to a percentage rate, represents a rate of return of almost 23%.

Telephone interviews and/or e-mail discussions were conducted with organisations which (according to ECDB) had been contemplating the implementation of their project within EQUAL and which, eventually, did not execute the project.

The evaluators attempted to approach the widest possible range of potential respondents. Therefore, organisations indicated as participants on the preparation of Action 1 projects in ECDB, which were not involved in the subsequent implementation phases, have been also approached.

⁴ A number of the organisations processed their financial statements and applied therefore for a postponement of the deadline.

The questionnaire survey results served as the basis for the preparation of the second survey round which covers additional evaluation questions and which is followed up with personal interviews with selected DP. Methodology and results of questioning for II questionnaire is included in Annex 1 hereof.

1.6 Questionnaire 2 and Subsequent Interviews

The reasons for including questionnaire survey phase II were the following three:

- The need to update data provided by DP at a time when (in February and March 2008) a number of additional validations were made,
- The need to complement the empirical base of evaluation questions (the lack of necessary data from previous phases prevailed),
- The necessity to complement structured interviews with necessary information.

The questionnaire was drawn up based on an analysis of the evaluation questions. The most challenging preparatory tasks included:

a) To translate the evaluation questions – mostly quite abstract, complex, and sometimes confusing – into a language understandable to the respondents.

Let us take two evaluation questions as an example:

1.04.B Does the identified innovation correspond to the focus of the particular project and to the potential options of resolving discrimination causes with the aid of the particular project?

1.04.D To what level and in what manner are the new proposed solutions more suitable for resolving existing problems compared to the existing and already applied policies and approaches to their solution?

Such or similar evaluation questions, of course, cannot be put directly to the respondents. They need to be re-formulated and divided into sets of partial questions that are interrelated. For this reason, an interview seems to be an impractical means for data acquisition.

The sustainability issue (question 1.04.E), for example, certainly is not a question of sufficient funds for the period when support from CIP EQUAL is no longer received. Moreover, we also need to consider institutional sustainability (necessary organisational, human, material, information and other resources), as well as political sustainability (changes to legislation and statutory provisions that will simplify or aggravate further activities).

b) To clearly, uniformly and at the same time concisely define some key terms, which should guarantee a uniform and, most of all, an absolutely clear understanding of some of the key terms by both parties.

The specified conciseness is vital for preserving the necessary cadence of the survey, as well as for guaranteeing a clear conception of a term on the part of the respondents, and we are thus forced to resort to simplification. Before inquiring about discrimination, for example, we had to remind the respondents of what to imagine under discrimination, i.e. to ensure a uniform understanding of the term. Unfortunately, this cannot be done in less than 3 lines without certain term depletion, i.e. this cannot be done without simplification.

We have used the formulation: “*Within the framework of the EQUAL initiative, discrimination means the exclusion of some groups of the population from finding a job or unequal conditions (i.e.*

inequality on the labour market), which result in the weakened ability of some groups of the population to find a new job.” The drawback of this definition lies in simplifying the issue and in denoting discrimination and inequality as one. Nonetheless, its immense advantage is that it provides a condensed and distinct formulation, thereby allowing all participants to speak and to think about the same matter.

If we wish to learn more about how a particular DP understood the term “discrimination”, we need to start with a set of questions, e.g.: “Does the selected innovation eliminate discrimination on inequality on the labour market? ... If yes, what discrimination or what inequality?”

After drawing up and testing the questionnaire on a small sample, we contacted the representatives of the majority of the DP participating in Action 2 and 3 (60 entities in total) by phone and we asked them to complete the questionnaire. They could do so during a personal visit of an expert or by completing the questionnaire independently and by sending it by post or e-mail. This allowed covering the majority of the DP over a relatively short period and at low costs, while acquiring sufficient empirical material for further processing.

The questionnaire survey was conducted between 3 and 17 March 2008, mostly through independently completed questionnaires. The questionnaire was customised for this purpose: it contained clear instructions, it was easy to complete and its layout was adjusted.

We have obtained an average of 165 pieces of information from the respondents on the work of individual organisations involved in a project within CIP EQUAL (in total, we have gathered, checked and processed 5,500 text and numerical data). All questionnaires were completed fully and earnestly and thus, no questionnaire was excluded from further processing.

The questionnaire was customised for both electronic and “manual” completion. Most of the respondents preferred electronic communication to personal meetings due to a lack of time and completed the questionnaire with the aid of a computer.

We approached the representatives of 60 DP and we obtained answers from 33 DP (33% rate of return). In exceptional cases, a representative of an organisation that had received a grant passed the questionnaire or telephone call over to a well-informed DP member (e.g. the representative of the Labour Bureau in Semily referred us to a representative of the Most ke vzdělávání (Bridge to Education) civic association).

1.7 Structured Interviews

The purpose of this method is to obtain specific information that cannot be acquired through the web questionnaire or other methods. The advantage of this method is the option of creating a comprehensive view of a problem. In the case of direct interviews conducted within the evaluation, structured interviews were conducted with the key actors of CIP EQUAL implementation from the MoLSA as well as from other professional institutions (NSS, NTN, etc.). Direct interviews were also conducted with a selected DP sample, as mentioned in the previous sub-chapter. The structure of the interview questions was determined in advance and was the same for all interviewed individuals within a specific respondent group (e.g. division into employees of the MA of CIP EQUAL, NSS,

NTN, DP). This facilitated a comparison of the responses as well as subsequent interview evaluations.

The individual areas of the direct interview structure were based on questions defined in each chapter hereof, dedicated to the evaluation of the particular CIP EQUAL principles.

There have been realised 49 structured interviews during March and May 2008, especially with the 4 groups of people specified hereinbelow:

- Representatives of DP, MA, NTN and NSS;
- Representatives of the policy, strategy and programme target groups;
- Representatives of public administration in charge of policy, strategy and programme implementation;
- Representatives of concerned institutions and organisations outside DP.

NSS employees were also approached within the frame of direct interviews. In addition, representatives of other institutions, e.g. the Ministry of Finance (National Fund), and/or representatives of professional organisations were approached as necessary.

The individual areas of the direct interview structure were based on evaluation questions defined in the subsequent chapters hereof.

In terms of their content, structured interviews especially focused on:

- DP CIP EQUAL outputs,
- Identifying factors that exist in the external environment of the project implementers, the occurrence of which resulted in the fulfilment/non-fulfilment of the evaluated principles,
- Ascertaining the tools which they consider as particularly significant,
- Verifying and complementing data acquired through questionnaire surveys and on identifying the procedures applied by DP,
- The interest of the concerned institutions and organisations outside DP in assuming the proposed solutions,
- The interest in further development of the activities executed so far.

The interviews were conducted by evaluation team members with sufficient knowledge in the particular area. The interviews were structured and the addressed employees were provided with a list of questions in advance so that they could prepare their answers. Selected interviews were recorded with the knowledge and consent of the respondents for the purpose of their later processing and the possibility to return to the acquired information and/or authorised records were drawn up.

1.8 Expert Panel

The purpose of applying this method is the necessity to provide qualified answers to a wide range of questions important for an objective evaluation: ranging from the suitability of the set targets to an estimate of the effects of the CIP EQUAL programme in terms of refining the partial conclusions arising from analyses of the web questionnaire and direct interview outputs. A circle of experts was identified, with whom a dialogue was established, whereas this co-operation resulted in conceiving a joint expert panel (workshop). Both representatives of the MA, DP and other experts in the field of employment and equal opportunity policies were invited to the meeting.

The purpose was to determine consensual recommendations for the future successful fulfilment of all the CIP EQUAL principles and the programme as a whole.

The expert panel assessed whether, based on existing theoretical knowledge and practical experience, efficiency of the effected changes in relation to the relevant targets could be presumed. In addition, a detailed analysis of the transmission mechanism of individual measures as well as a possible risk of its failure was performed. The limitation of individual impacts and their long-term sustainability was discussed within the panel.

Before summoning the meeting, the expert panel members received basic documents from the evaluation team, in which the individual issues were elaborated in detail. Thus, the panel members were not required to devise individual links, but to critically analyse the evaluation team outputs to ensure their professionalism.

The expert panel focusing on the partnership principle comprised of a representative of the organisation active in DP, representatives of public administration and NGO. In addition, representatives of organisations that play a controlling role within the framework of DP as well as (non)key partners were invited.

The expert panels focusing on thematic evaluations of mainstreaming, partnership and empowerment, as well as the impacts of CIP EQUAL on the labour market in the CR were held in the end of June 2008.

As the issue of empowerment is conceived as being very close to partnership, the empowerment theme was discussed jointly with the partnership theme.

The composition of the expert panel members in relation to the theme of impact evaluation in the CR was the following:

- Public administration dealing with labour market development issues: MoLSA,
- Academic sector and research institutions,
- Representatives of NGOs focusing on the issue of social inclusion on the labour market and on social cohesion.

The purpose of executing the expert panels primarily constituted controlled professional discussions aimed at the partial evaluation outputs, which resulted in increasing the accuracy or in amending the results within the framework of individual evaluation issues. The second expert panel cycle focused on a confrontation of the expert team conclusions

with the experience of invited experts, and on verifying the relevance and validity of the conclusions relating to the relevant theme.

1.9 Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were a complementary activity and a research method. Telephone interviews followed up with the two main qualitative research methods, which are structured interviews and the web questionnaire. Telephone interviews were used if it was necessary to put specific questions to the target group (DP representatives) concerning the evaluation of any of the principles or in order to clarify web questionnaire responses. Telephone interviews proved beneficial in the case of organisations which had originally contemplated the implementation of their projects within CIP EQUAL and which eventually had not implemented them due to various reasons. Particularly such organisations were the target of most professional telephone interviews.

1.10 ECDB Data

The ECDB database contains data on 58 projects implemented in the Czech Republic. Information, particularly as regards the innovation principle, was gathered separately for each project and subsequently, a table was processed, summarising all projects and their data based on which further statistical calculations were made.

When assessing the projects from the point of view of innovation, the database lists also the level of innovation of each project from various viewpoints. All projects are “assigned” a specific number of asterisks in the ECDB database and they are further processed and analysed based on this parameter. Not all projects contained all the innovation outputs and the quality of other outputs also varied.

1.11 MSSF Monit Data

Data acquired from MSSF Monit were utilised from three different levels:

- Data at the level of individual DP,
- Data at the level of thematic areas,
- Data at the level of the overall CIP EQUAL programme.

The data were used for evaluation analyses with the aid of statistical methods.⁵ Concurrently, the evaluation team linked these “hard” data with data acquired through the questionnaire surveys (the relevant DP was the connecting link).

⁵ A correlation analysis and various types of regression analyses were particularly used. The applied methods and results are indicated in the appropriate evaluation report sections

1.12 Comparative Analyses

Comparative analyses were executed at two levels:

- A comparison of the DP focus and formulation of the DP objectives and the created outputs in terms of their compliance and fulfilment of the set objectives;
- A comparison of the existing solutions applied in existing policies, strategies and expenditure programmes with solutions proposed by DP in terms of their added value in relation to the subject issue.

1.13 Data Synthesis and Recommendation Formulation

The use of the synthesis of acquired data was necessary to formulate recommendations and/or to formulate recommendations for similarly oriented programmes in the future. Concurrently, the synthesis provided conditions necessary for the formulation of relevant recommendations for future programmes focused on the support of innovative projects, namely in terms of proposing suitable methods for verifying compliance with developed tools and their focus described in project applications.

1.14 Case Study Processing

The aim of the case studies was to verify compliance of the identified innovation with the focus of the subject project and its anticipated outputs. The case studies laid emphasis on an analysis of the reasons of non-compliance with the anticipated project outputs and their actual resultant form. The significance of the duration of Action 1, Action 2 and Action 3 for achieving innovation of the subject DP as well as their mutual links or concurrence was particularly examined. Case study processing also included a comparison of the NSS activities in the CR and of selected NSS in the EU. The strengths and weaknesses of the NSS activities in the CR were also explored. With regard to the progress of work at individual DP, special attention was given to Action 3 activities.

1.15 International Experience

With some of the assigned tasks, the contract documents already contain a requirement to perform a selection of the EU member states where evaluations have also taken place. The case of the United Kingdom as one of the former EU countries and the case of Slovakia as one of the new EU countries were analysed. The reasons for this selection are namely the following:

- The United Kingdom belongs among the most significant EU countries with a view to its active role in defining and gradually implementing reforms of the EU regional policy, which also includes the EU Structural Funds and thus, also CIP EQUAL.
- EU structural policy experts deem the UK NSS as an institution that diligently fulfils the activities necessary to provide quality support not only to CIP EQUAL in the United Kingdom at the programme level, but mainly from the point of view of the

needs of Developmental Partnerships (see numerous methodical manuals available on the Ecotec website, created by Ecotec for individual DP).

- According to the analyses focusing on foreign language knowledge among the Czech population, English is considered as the most frequently mastered foreign language – we may therefore presume that also among the DP CR representatives, the majority of the involved experts are fluent in English and thus, they could, in case of their interest, work with basic documents processed to support specific aspects of the DP activities directly in the United Kingdom, if such procedure proves to bring substantial added value to Czech DP in the course of the evaluation.
- When drawing funds from the EU Structural Funds in the CR, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the CR, as well as other key ministries (i.e. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the CR, Ministry for Regional Development of the CR, etc.) have been utilising EC twinning projects in the past to transfer the know how in this area particularly from the United Kingdom. The proposed CR – UK comparative analyses shall thus allow evaluating to what level the previous co-operation with Great Britain and within the framework of CIP EQUAL management in the CR was actually capitalised.
- Among the newly accessing EU member states, Slovakia is the closest partner of the CR in terms of business and foreign policy due to historical reasons.
- The Slovak legal order to this date still partially comprises legal acts originating in the period prior to the division of the CSFR and thus, relevant in many areas for the CIP EQUAL implementation.
- Documents conceived in Slovakia to provide support to CIP EQUAL could also be directly used in the CR in the event of an evaluation of their special contribution, namely due to the fact that there is no language barrier between these countries. Therefore, the DP representatives who are not fluent in foreign languages may also significantly profit from the experience and documents of the Slovak CIP EQUAL implementation structures.

1.16 Implementation Schedule

The project was implemented in 2007 and 2008. A larger part of the implementation took place in 2008. An operative target for 2007 was set out, which was aimed at assembling a data and information basis and its preparation for a detailed analysis in 2008. The already mentioned data analysis and an interpretation of the information acquired in such manner have taken place in the first half of 2008.

In order to ensure the up-to-datedness of information contained in the final evaluation report, the database has been complemented and the acquired data have been updated in 2008.

2 Innovation Principle Evaluation

2.1 Introduction

The report from evaluation of innovation principle is divided to the following sections, which apply the logic of origin of innovations, their validation and follow-up application. There is specified methodology of data collection first, which differentiates from other methods used in all other evaluations (see chapter 1 of this report). Then the evaluation team considers pitfalls and risks connected with evaluation of innovations in CIP EQUAL. The great attention is dedicated to issues whether supportive or limitative, which influence innovations during their creation and application.

2.2 Evaluation questions and findings

Evaluation questions were given by the Terms of Reference and we are referencing to them.

Evaluation theme 1: Evaluation of the development of innovations in relation to current state of relevant public programme interventions, sector, or region.

- **1.01A What new products or processes appeared with respect to the current state of the relevant public programme intervention area, sector, or region?**

There have been developed many new products and processes in CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic. As the development partnerships worked with vague and unclear definition of innovations, it caused a massive decreasing of requirements concerning innovations and different understanding of total results. The majority of products have a character of innovations in wider sense – new products or processes in activities of particular organization or region.

Thus it is innovation from the point of view of project organizations, although their common impact is improvement of target groups of CIP EQUAL on the labour market. We can't say that every innovation caused change on the labour market during its mainstreaming.

There have been few innovations in narrower sense – such a change of a process, a product or an environment, which detectable decreases discrimination or inequalities on the labour market, or which are validated and disseminated or applied in public sector strategies preparation.

An analysis of 77 validated product showed that there have been mainly validated methodises, particular courses or informational materials, especially publications. Those are products, which are easy to be disseminated in horizontal mainstreaming.

- **1.01B Are adequate innovation development and identification procedures implemented within DP?**

Methodology for products validation issued by the National Support Structure and the Managing Authority in June 2007 was crucial for identification of innovations. Regrettably, for many DPs was the main objective of validation a defence of their outputs and results, not the preparation for further dissemination and application on the labour market. Some DPs didn't understand validation as preposition for quality verification and successful dissemination.

Development partnerships verify success of their innovation, mainly by on-going contact with the target group. Sophisticated tools as surveys or search were less used.

Evaluation theme 2: Identification and validation of positive factor leading to development of innovative tools in CIP EQUAL.

- **1.02A What are the identified factors of the occurrence of which during project management and implementation aided in the development of innovative tools?**

Participation of target groups in project management, on-going consultancy from the side of the partners in DPs, inspiration and consultation with foreign partners and cooperation with external partners help to develop innovative tools. Of those tools, on-going consultancy from the side of partners was the fundamental aspect for innovations. There were less applied organizational factors (cooperation of stakeholders in innovation application and its timing), ability of the organization to create a new market (e.g. increase demand) and emphasis on marketing, presentation and innovation dissemination. We recommend to organizations to have possibility to learn how to use combination of tools for application of innovations in the new programming period.

- **1.02B What are the identifying factors which exist in the external environment of the project implementers, the occurrence of which resulted in the development of innovative tools?**

Effect of the innovative tools was supported by seminars, consultations (MA, NSS or NTN) the most. Institutions, mainly supporting effect of innovative tools, were NGOs in DPs. The effect of innovative tools was least supported by ministries (except MoLSA), private sector and public administration outside DPs. None of the above mentioned subject was a dominant supporter during innovation application. It is quite an interesting in the case of labour offices, NSS, professional chambers and other NGOs as they could have crucial role in innovation support. We see the causes of these results in both low activity of DPs and other subjects outside DPs.

- **1.02C Was the development of innovative tools positively affected by the duration of the project implementation?**

Action 1, 2 and 3 correspond to the innovation cycle. Therefore, in Action 2 were done analyzes, which are usually done during the project's preparation phase. The causality in innovative tools development and validation was disturbed by the call for proposals Action 2 and 3 together. DPs mainly used the maximum time of the project with reference to testing

and changing of particular tools according to target groups' needs. DPs gained new experience, which was possible to use in following activities. Development of innovative tools was positively influenced by length of the project's implementation time.

- **1.02D Was the development of innovative tools positively affected by the existence of support tools and documents mediated by the Managing Authority?**

Factors, which positively influenced development of innovative tools, are the following – cooperation of DPs in TCAs, preparation and realization of validations, direct interventions of MA and NSS. Almost half of the representatives of DPs see useful also guides, publications and seminars organized by MA and NSS.

Evaluation theme 3: Identification and validation of factor, which don't lead to development of innovative tools in CIP EQUAL.

- **1.03A What are the identifying factors the occurrence of which during project management and implementation inhibit the development of innovative tools and/or reduce their efficiency?**

The final period of the projects' realization increased experience of organization, which were mainly able to put away internal barriers for innovations development. Development of innovative tools was inhibited the most by: disability or impossibility to get support of other institutions, which were needed for innovation implementation. Other reasons were wrong initial analysis and redundancy of activities.

- **1.03B What are the identifying factors which exist in the external environment of the implemented projects and inhibit the development of innovative tools and/or reduce their efficiency?**

The changes of conditions from the side of NSS and MA are the factors, which inhibited innovative tools development or decrease of their effect. Other factors are inadequate administrative burden, too many information and guides from MA and NSS. Lack of funding and inflexible funding system are other aspects of decreasing of effects of innovations. DPs would welcome less regulation, bigger space and less strict requirements. According to DPs was NSS too oriented to formal correctness of small activities and thus lowered capacities of DPs to enforce innovations.

Evaluation theme 4: Innovations quality evaluation

- **1.04A Is the identified innovation based on a conclusive and thorough analysis of the discrimination causes?**

It isn't possible to answer positively to the question whether the innovations were based on proper analyses of causes of discrimination. According to more than 85 % of responses to the

questionnaire, identified innovation was based on proper analyses of causes of discrimination. The quality of analyses varies. The analyses are sometimes outputs of DPs or validated products of DPs. The analyses were used for shaping activities in other cases.

- **1.04B Does the identified innovation correspond to the focus of the particular project and to the potential options of resolving discrimination causes with the aid of the particular project?**

In the case of almost all DPs innovation allegedly corresponded with possibilities of the project in connection to means of solving causes of discrimination. Rarely the representatives of DPs spoke about the project's minor scope, ambitions and objectives. The DPs' products are mainly publications, guides, methodises or web sites. These products can be mentioned as tangible outputs of the projects. The products didn't correspond with the main objective of the project in all cases.

- **1.04C How beneficial is the identified innovation when resolving existing discrimination causes?**

The relevance and effect of innovations is disputative in the case of several projects due to the complexity of tasks to solve. It wasn't a problem in the case of many other organizations.

- **1.04D To what level and in what manner are the new proposed solutions more suitable for resolving existing problems compared to the existing and already applied policies and approaches to their solution?**

Solutions proposed by DPs are better in comparison with existing work experience. DPs used several tools for validation of their innovation, mainly comparison of their approaches and results with approaches and results of other institutions. Majority of DPs uses questionnaires for target groups for investigation of the good practices. DPs got information from MA and NSS how to investigate and increase "added value" of their innovations.

- **1.04E To what level are the proposed solutions further applicable in terms of fund availability from the moment the CIP EQUAL funds are no longer available?**

The usual method of sustainability of the innovations is the following: DPs prepare similar projects, especially for OP HRE, create good relationships with public administration and take care of horizontal dissemination of innovations. The main barriers of dissemination of innovations forecasted by DPs are lack of funding for application of innovations. Other reasons are lack of material, technical sources and lack of premises and ineffective cooperation of providers of relevant services.

It isn't desirable to reduce the sustainability to financial affairs of activities. It is also sustainability at the institutional level (organizational, personnel, information sources) on the side of the organization and political sustainability (changes in legal framework). The willingness of other providers on the labour market is a crucial aspect.

- **1.04 F What is the level of interest among involved entities within and outside DP in assuming the proposed solutions and what mechanisms were introduced to support the assumption of the relevant solutions?**

It is possible to confirm, that solutions proposed by DPs are being disseminated or DPs are working on it (both inside and outside the DP). It is necessary to highlight that innovation is long-term affair and to it is needed to work on innovation's dissemination also after the project's end. There have been prepared tools for the further dissemination and application of innovations – especially validations and mainstreaming strategy. Therefore, the effect of those tools and processes was decreased by not-completed validations at the DP level. The effect is also decreased by lack of further work on persuasion of the relevant policies on the labour market.

The authors of innovations used NTN for the purpose of mainstreaming also in cases where there have been solved regional problems, where regional mainstreaming structures would be more appropriate.

2.3 Methodological approach to evaluation of innovations

The task of development partnerships was to develop, validate and with help of other organizations to implement new, innovative tools for putting aside discrimination and inequalities on the labour market. It was the key base for work of evaluation team during the process of evaluation of innovation principle as one of the key principles of CIP EQUAL.

During the data collection, there have appeared, that the results of the evaluation of innovation principle are influenced by two aspects:

- Vagueness of key definitions to DPs.
- Quality, integrity and accessibility of data from DPs.

2.3.1 Vagueness of key definitions

Keeping exact, explicit and uniform reading of basic terms concerning CIP EQUAL from the side of the programme provider (MA), implementing body (NSS) and beneficiaries (DPs and partners) is the key question for evaluation of principle of innovation in CIP EQUAL.

Regrettably many terms are unclear, ambiguous or misread.⁶ It concerns mainly the following terms:

- The added value (it is read by DPs as what is new)⁷ and difference between innovation and added value,
- Dissemination and mainstreaming and difference between them (some DPs read mainstreaming as any dissemination of innovation, including taking-over by another organization with similar type of services),

⁶ It was deepened by definitions of EC, MoLSA, and PwC, as we mention it later again.

⁷ „Such a service isn't accessible in the region, the closest consultancy of such a type is provided by OHK Děčín...“, added value is created by „practical process, clear instructions for current and new employees“ ...

- Discrimination and inequality and difference between them (both terms are confusing for DPs)
- Innovations,
- Factors of innovations and,
- Partnership.

We had to define working definitions in some cases of the main terms to enable questioning and collecting responses to the questions we really asked and what we really needed to find out. Otherwise we risk loss of plausibility of results and loss of possibility to compare data and process them.

For example, VOŠ Dakol mentions in the monitoring report of the project „Your future“, that there was created final product based on validation processes and following evaluation activities. This product is dedicated to be mainstreamed among educational agencies in the CR (except Prague). As a matter of fact it is dissemination.

We stop by the terms of innovation and factors of innovation as we need them for further interpretation of evaluation findings. We need them especially for additional empirical investigation, which brings additional information for answering evaluation questions.

2.3.2 Innovation term

Several approaches given to Czech subjects

There are innovation and innovation principle described in a different way in Czech and European documents. The fact that there are used known words, leads to sense of understanding the meaning in the case of project managers of DPs. Vagueness, unclear limits and changing contents were the result caused by different definitions. Thus, it is difficult to make interviewees understood and understand the meaning. First we must find understanding of innovation from both sides and unify it.

Variability and increasing miscellanea of content and widening of the definition lead to loss of plausibility.

Guide for beneficiaries for Action 2 a 3 dated 1st of February 2006 mentions: *„It is possible to characterise the principle of innovations by many ways, in the frame of the Community Initiative EQUAL are used the following definitions:*

- *Other, uncommon, new or untried approach or technique,*
- *Other method of realizing activities,*
- *Newly added value to current services and product. “⁸*

The evaluator is confident that this explanation is not clear-cut. Innovation might be described in this way, but not the whole principle of innovation. Above mentioned attributes constitute very wide approach, which is taken by DPs as any speciality in their work experience.

⁸ www.equalcr.cz

There appeared explanations how the innovations are mainly defined:

- as a process, which leads to something new, or to application of new approaches and methods (which might be called „principle of innovation“)
- only as a result of activities, with the aim to come to something new (which might be called „innovation“)

It leads to „innovation of the term innovation“, because we would understand the innovation as particular tangible or intangible product, which was validated, disseminated among users and then applied to public administration, etc. More detailed view is in the following part of the chapter 2.2

The final report of the Second phase of on-going evaluation of CIP EQUAL⁹, indentified itself with a wider application of innovations. It sketches out context, in which the DPs understand innovative aspects and activities:

- Development of new methods in particular thematic field (processes in work with target group, advisory centres, assistance),
- Development of new tools (guides, methodises, educational courses, SW+internet),
- Development of new principles (connection of services, proposals of changes to legislative framework, activities aimed at changes of stance of majority).

According to Guide to DPs CIP EQUAL dated October 2006 is innovation defined in the frame of principles CIP EQUAL as „**creation and following validation of new approaches to solution of discrimination and inequalities on the labour market**“..„Innovation is more than just an idea or invention. It is implementation, application of the idea in life“, „Innovation is a process...Innovation is conceived as a creation and validation of new approaches to discrimination and inequalities on the labour market“. Farther „Innovation is a new approach or dissemination of experience from abroad. “

It is closer to official approach to innovations in CIP EQUAL from the European Commission. Innovation is not only a creation, but also finding and exploration, in the concept of the EC. Especially exploration was a key value of CIP EQUAL during the first period of existence. It is clear, that the innovation must be found first and then proposed, created, validated, disseminated and applied in other agencies or applied as a standard in policy of public administration (mainstreaming).

Such an approach corresponds to definition of the European Union – see e.g. Standard Terms of Reference for Independent Evaluators for the EQUAL CIPs in the New Member States (2006): „**Innovation – to explore and test new approaches in the formulating, delivering and implementing of employment and training policies.**“¹⁰

It is possible to say that the basic approach of the EU doesn't disintegrate innovation to particular tangible or intangible products such as new guides, courses or web sites for target

⁹ Final report „The second phase of on-going evaluation of CIP EQUAL“, 2006.

¹⁰ „... to explore and test new approaches in the formulating, delivering and implementing of employment and training policies“. It is interesting that “policy” is in the Czech language used as „politics“ and it also probably contaminated meaning of the term mainstreaming.

groups. It happened in the CR. There was applied too extensive approach in the Czech experience. Let's compare it with the requirement of the EC¹¹: „EQUAL will be a testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivery of employment policies. The key outcome of the EQUAL Initiative should be innovation. This is understood as completely new approaches, or a transfer of elements from elsewhere, which increase the effectiveness of policy delivery. “

EU approach is thus narrower. It is aimed at „fundamental change“, far from any difference in comparison with current situation. There are similar requirement in evaluation reports. For example in the final report of evaluation of OP EQUAL in Ireland (2005) is innovation apprehend as „quite new solution, combination of existing solutions or transfer of components from elsewhere, which might improve applied approaches“. Also creation and work of DP itself might be classified as innovative. As innovation is also classified closer understanding of target group and its inclusion to preparation and development of new products. Further it is the ability of partners to offer different skills (including additional skills), by which is upgraded development process (see page 56).

Concerning the aspects of innovation it is written for the purpose of validation of products in the check list – innovation means „existence of new aspects and singularities of a product, what distinguishes the product from other products with similar characteristics and intentions; added value of the product in relation to conventional solutions and development of new skills“. Instructions lead the users to very reasonable requirements to innovations – e.g. „Does the product increase and develop new skills of users and final beneficiaries? ... Is the product a result of different mutual contributions from different partners?“.

Those criteria of quality induce an effect that a beneficiary created innovation if it developed new skill or if the innovation is a result of work of more partners. Indeed, it is an innovation, but it is an innovation of other pattern in comparison with „completely new approach“. Innovations based on new textbook, web site or new topics of trainings change the strategy (policy) of employment neither in the CR, regions nor municipalities.

Summing up, those and other directions and definitions might let DPs be convinced that innovation is anything, what corresponds at least with one of such approaches.

Based on above- mentioned cases, it is not clear, what innovation is and what the attributes of innovation are. It seems to be a problem for Managing Authority CIP EQUAL, particular DPs during proving results and outcomes of projects and also for evaluators of further phase of CIP EQUAL evaluation.

2.3.3 Categories of innovations

There were defined three categories of innovation in the EU for the purpose of CIP EQUAL (see how was the terms shifted to narrower sense by practical cases)¹²:

¹¹ “EQUAL will be a testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivery of employment policies. The key outcome of the EQUAL Initiative should be innovation. This is understood as completely new approaches, or a transfer of elements from elsewhere, which increase the effectiveness of policy delivery.“

¹² See e.g. Innovations, Guide for development (PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS CR and MoLSA 2006).

- Innovations aimed at processes – it is mainly creation of new methods, tools and approaches, but also improvement of current methods, e.g. creation of new techniques, new ways of integration support. This type is the most common.
- Innovations aimed at an objective – it is mainly formulation of new objectives and it might include different approaches of identification of new and advanced job positions and opening of new areas with job opportunities on the labour market, e.g. aiming at new target groups, new qualifications.
- Innovations aimed at context – it is connected with political and institutional structures. This type is aimed at creation of a system on the labour market, e.g. creation of new strategies and policies on the labour market, creation of new local and regional associations and organizations.

The evaluator doesn't make a difference between processes and objectives in the frame of evaluation of innovations. It is due to the fact that new objectives are included in innovations all cases. Each innovation has its objective (excluding unintended impacts). It is important, whether the objective concerns:

- change of current or introduction of new products, outcomes, results of activities (innovation of a product)
- change of current or introduction of new processes of providers of services (innovation of a process),
- changes outside the organization (outside the particular provider of services), which were caused by the organization's activities (innovation in the environment, in surrounding of the organization)

Those are the innovative products applied on the labour market, innovative processes on the labour market or innovative changes in the surrounding with influences on the labour market. This approach differentiates between innovations inside and outside organization in comparison with innovations based on processes and on tangible or intangible products. It is clear, that in comparison with usual approach, it is changing broad definition of innovations aimed at process and objective (where DPs usually waver). There will be a few innovations aimed at processes, whereas there will be majority of innovations of products. Descriptions of products correspond with it (*see Compendium of developing products, July 2007*).

It is possible to accept just those changes of process, product or surrounding as an innovation in the narrower sense, which arguably put aside discrimination or inequality on the labour market. It must be beneficial for disadvantaged groups. We can't speak about innovation if it wasn't applied in common use or there wasn't any real change (J. Harrison). If it is probable that there will be a real change in close future, it is possible to speak about potential innovation. Thus, realized innovation is not that innovation developed and tested by using, but a change still not yet disseminated, mainstreamed and applied.

We are able to concern:

- Is the (future) innovation aimed at a process, product or surrounding? – *If none of them, it can't be an innovation in CIP EQUAL sense.*
- Does it put aside discrimination or inequality on the labour market? *If not, it isn't an innovation.*

- Which of the disadvantaged groups have direct (or indirect) benefit? – *If there are known no such groups, it isn't an innovation.*
- Has been this innovation already disseminated and mainstreamed? *If not, it isn't a realized innovation, it is at most a potential innovation..*

It would be possible to make conclusion on real innovations of outputs and results of DPs according to above-mentioned. This sincere approach is too strict for current approach in CIP EQUAL. Majority of development partnerships wasn't able to prove that its innovation had (has) real impact on putting aside discriminations and inequalities. We could just claim at most that there is such a potential – which doesn't need to be met, especially because of feasibility of such innovation is dependent on other subjects (both private and public) on the labour market and their free will.

Those are the reasons, why we use the approach established by the Managing Authority: wider concept of innovations and innovations divided to processes, objectives and context. The second phase of questioning tests also presented approach with evaluation of products. We use both wider and narrower approach for acknowledging what is and what isn't innovation.¹³

2.3.4 Evaluation of innovation term

Comparison of different approaches to defining innovations and their categories mentioned more to the detail in the chapters above show that the DPs were moved on to quite a wide and „shallow“ approach. Thus, for meeting the requirements of innovation quite a small change in the organization work experience is enough. It caused increasing of a number of created innovative products and processes from planned 70 to actual 300 and increasing of validated innovative products from planned 42 to actual 58.¹⁴

We see the fact that the DPs didn't get up the logic of terminology of outputs, results and impacts as disadvantageous for consequent quality of innovations. If they did it, we could mention particular DPs' products – such as guides and courses – as outputs and honour results as innovations. We will formulate a recommendation for MA of future ESF programmes: to provide beneficiaries with full understanding of terms and using them appropriately. Further more we recommend to avoid inconsequent using of terms as innovative tools and products or processes, which are sometimes used arbitrarily by DPs and NTN.

Vagueness and ambiguity of definition of innovation caused „inflation of innovations“, which adds value to employment strategies or employment policies, but usually don't have ambitions to change those strategies or policies (or standard of activities on the labour market).

¹³ An expert of NTN B has done the evaluation of outputs and products separately in its evaluation report of mainstreaming strategy NTN B.

¹⁴ Compendium of developed products, CIP EQUAL working version, July 2007

2.3.5 Factors of innovation

Some evaluation questions work with factors of innovation (e.g. 1.02.A, 1.02.B (explicitly) and 1.04.F (implicitly), see list of evaluation questions in chapter 2.1). It seems that references in number of documents on factors influencing success in implementation, dissemination and further application of innovations appeared ad hoc by adding cases or common experience-based influences. Firstly, it is necessary to bring a systematic concept, which will be simple enough to be operational to questioning DPs.

Many factors influencing application of innovations are known from productive sphere. It is possible to cluster those factors into three categories, than to apply them to products and processes in Action 2 and 3 CIP EQUAL. Finally it is possible to transfer them to language of research questions and use them in questionnaires and interviews with representatives of DPs.

General factors of success of innovations:

- **Technological factors:**
 - specific features of new product (it is completely new product or service for a specific clients' group, creation of high added value, innovation created competitive advantage),
 - factualness of production, introduction of a service;
- **Marketing factors:**
 - orientation to client
 - ability to create market (i.e. increase demand after a new product or a new service),
 - emphasis on marketing (optimal connection of „five Ps“: Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People);
- **Organizational factors:**
 - co-operation of stakeholders while introducing an innovation
 - appropriate timing of innovation

Those factors are the subject of empirical research, which was done by questioning DPs.

2.3.6 Quality, integrity and accessibility of data from DPs.

Data are the information coming from DPs and NSS (although mediated or made-over by National support structure or other institutions). Those are information decisive for empirical basis of evaluation as they include a) original notices of DPs' representatives or particular partners, b) facts and messages from monitoring reports, from results of validations and from web sites of projects, c) compendiums and statistics done by NSS.

It is necessary to mention the integrity of basis for evaluation that validation of products was at its starting point during the period January to March 2008, when the main part of data

collection for evaluation was held. We hadn't summaries of results of validations, or more precisely validation reports and records at that time. We had to elicit some findings from not yet finished, validated innovations, but from planned innovations.

The team of evaluator realized additionally one questioning in comparison with other evaluations included in this report. This questioning was primarily aimed at the innovations. Concluding analyses are combinations of information and data collected from web questioning and additional questioning.

In July 2008, we could expand our collected data on information from executed validations, NTN's expert's reports, and Labour offices and policy makers documents that have been collected within the vertical mainstreaming process.¹⁵ Furthermore, four final monitoring reports of DP have been received and approved by both NSS and MA in that time.

2.4 Evaluation theme 1: Evaluation of innovation development

In compliance with the contract documents, we were gathering and assessing, in evaluating the innovation development, the new products and processes planned and created by the RPs. The fundamental prerequisite of successful innovation is to define objectives and plan activities whereby to meet the objectives. We evaluated the appropriateness of the innovation development and identification procedures. We dealt with the planned outputs and the actual products of RPs, including validation and mainstreaming.

Evaluation question 1: What new products or processes appeared with respect to the current state of the relevant public programme intervention area, sector, or region?

2.4.1 Products and processes planning and development

The information about the planned products of DPs was taken from the IS MONIT, the MA databases (Products under Development Overview, and Collection of Products), and the NPS Validations, and collected by directly asking DPs, MAs, and NSSs.

Containing 161 products, the Products under Development Overview¹⁶ was created in mid 2007, when the projects were still under way. The Survey contains the list of contemplated projects presented by 65 DPs, while publications, printed or electronic material, and training courses – that is all that can be regarded as project outputs – are usually published in the Collection. The Collection of Products is the updated documents presenting CIP EQUAL projects and their outputs.¹⁷ It contains 159 already developed products and notes as to the innovativeness of each project.¹⁸

Which products have been / are to be validated and when are specified in the February 2008 Validation Survey; validation surveys are compiled by NSS on a regular basis. Specific

¹⁵ Zpráva MPSV o implementaci národní mainstreamingové strategie za období duben – červen 2008.

¹⁶ CIP EQUAL Working Document, Products under Development Overview. MPSV, July 2007

¹⁷ Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, Collection of Documents, June 2008

¹⁸ The Products Overview introductory part contains no information as to the definition of the product, and it remains a question whether all DPs understood the product uniformly.

validation experience of some organisations was presented at the Good Practice Validation seminar held 23 January 2008. Sjednocená organizace nevidomých a slabozrakých (the United Organisation of the Blind and the Sight-impaired) with the project TYFLOEMPLOYABILITY, and the DP DELTA had been among the first to get involved.

The July 2008 Survey of NSS Validations contains 85 planned or executed validations and is the basic data source to get familiarised with the validation process. Given that NTN C was involved in the strengthening of social economy and particularly community services, in respect of which a rather strong innovation activity might be expected, and held the largest number of meetings, it is interesting that NTN C planned nine out of the 85 validations only, while 26 were planned by NTN D, 14 by B, 18 by A, 12 by E, and six by F. Validations were held from September 2007 to May 2008. The largest number of proceedings were held in 2008 because of product finalisation by DP, a process previous to validation proceedings, i.e. innovative products quality assessment. As many as 77 CIP EQUAL products were put to validation from September 2007 to 30 June 2008, and NSS has been communicated that 68 out of these 77 products have been validated.

An analysis of the IS MONIT data on the number of planned and actual innovative products reveals apparent differences in the stakeholders' understanding of products and outputs definitions. As many as 768 actual innovative products are reported, but this number is utterly unrealistic, and as communicated by MA, NSS have been told to investigate into this. Consequently, we have omitted these data from statistical analysis.

Table 2: The CIP EQUAL- Program Monitoring Indicators

	Plan	Reality	Reality/Plan Ratio (%)
Total products	317	882	278.23
Innovative products	70 (22%)	768 (87%)	1097.14
Validated products	42 (13%)	374 (42%)	890.48
Mainstreaming products	30 (9%)	172 (20%)	573.33

IS MONIT report, 11. 09. 2008

The conclusions in respect of the analysis of the ECDB projects database are presented in the 2007 Evaluation Report. From the point of view of the CIP EQUAL categories, 35 projects of 58 (60%) can be defined as projects focusing on process-oriented innovation, while 20 projects focused on result-oriented innovation. Training projects and consulting services projects have been identified as most innovative, using the ECDB database. On the other hand, it is likely that the projects submitted in respect of job rotation and job sharing, placement in employment, and anticipating technical changes failed to show innovativeness.¹⁹

¹⁹ In the assessment of project innovativeness, the different results of projects' innovativeness were specified in the database. All results were rated with stars. Not every project had all innovativeness

That was only the plan, however. Further in the text it will be demonstrated that although a large percentage of the development partnerships planned and generated new products, most of these were designed or piloted only, but failed to become widely spread and put into practice in respect of mainstreaming as at the time of collecting the core data.

2.4.2 Innovation Nature and Identification

The answers from DP reveal that development partnerships generated an average of 4.2 and 1.8 innovations under Action 2 and Action 3, respectively.²⁰ DPs most often innovated (76 %) in respect of brand new products or procedures. Only 24 % of respondents innovated in respect of improvements of existing products or procedures. These results are in agreement with the information from the managing authority and the data published in the CIP EQUAL Collection of Products.

The answers from DP survey focusing on innovations and objectives report that 64 % of DP orients on new approach to identifying or meeting customer needs. Nearly the same number of DPs (61 %) focuses their activities on new qualification of existing target groups.

Table 3: DPs focusing on innovations and objectives

	Percentage of DPs
§ Benefits of the innovation prepared (under implementation)	
New approach to identifying or meeting customer needs	64
New organisation of labour in the providers of social, education and training, counselling, or employment services	36
§ Objectives pursued by DPs in their activities	
New qualification of existing target groups	61
New target groups (not as yet defined as target groups)	27
Create or intermediate new jobs	27
New qualification of providers of social services and employment services	18
§ DPs have created ...	
A new system or a design thereof on the labour market	33

Source: Questionnaire survey

Although most DPs promised in their projects (i.e. also in ECDB) that they would innovate existing procedures, product-oriented innovations slightly prevail in their practice and self-assessments. The fewest cases concerned environment (context) changes, such as new bills or

outputs and the quality of other outputs varied. All assessments of the outputs of all projects were aggregated on this basis; their assessments were marked on a scale 1–4 (using the star rating in the ECDB database), and the results were further statistically analysed to obtain the following outputs.

²⁰ Respondents' answers are listed in the appendix.

other legislation, or a new local or regional association dealing with labour market issues. Here are examples of these ‘contextual innovations’ (DP citation):

Table 4: Four cases of contextual innovations

- A new method of collaboration in regional networks in order to employ a multidisciplinary approach and effectively implement labour rehabilitation, define collaboration forms, draft changes to existing advisory activities legislation and some passages on labour rehabilitation (the Employment Act, and Decree 518/2004 implementing the Employment Act).
- A network of collaborating organisations – labour offices, job agencies, companies, and target groups – was established in the Ústí nad Labem region in order to support adaptability, training, and higher employability in the project target groups. The Centre for Support to Employees is a possible model of similar training centres that might be regional training centres providing services to regional employers and their employees, labour offices as well as individuals.
- IMPULS counselling and information offices are established to serve an area (Most, Ústí nad Labem, and Roudnice nad Labem) and the target groups identified by the relevant labour office or those having asked for collaboration on their own initiative.
- A system of support to employment in the country has been established as part of the project.
- A clearly defined objective (product) can be found in respect of the hospice civic association Cesta domů. As part of CIP EQUAL, the project is aimed to help to incorporate in the legislation of the Czech Republic the services of mobile hospices as normal and regular practice. This theme is a serious one and even a particular output would be a great achievement and of benefit for the society. Without any intention to evaluate this objective or question what Cesta domů does, it must be admitted that we have not found in any documents or information sources available to the public any relevant information about what has been (or failed to be) achieved in this project or any information as to any steps or activities associated with this objective. Also, the project relevance in respect of CIP EQUAL failed to be clarified, such as which labour market stakeholders are expected to benefit from hospice services directly – the project implementers extended their interest beyond the definition of people with low employability)²¹. Publication of outputs and relevancies will be discussed under Evaluation Theme 4.

DPs often erred by classifying their products or procedures as innovative or context-oriented. A typical drawback was that DPs reported their innovations when they had been documented, ready, and tried and tested in practice by the recipient, but not yet adopted by other providers, established in practice, or tried by other organisations. DP representatives tended to introduce their ‘innovations’ by phrases such as *‘The innovative model has a potential*

²¹ We used these sources: www.equalcr.cz, www.umirani.cz, www.cestadomu.cz, Collection of Products, and List of Validated Products.

to change the situation on the labour market. Along with that, it should be a guide in the preparation of government programmes.’, or ‘The proposals are currently under way.

2.4.3 Overview of products and processes identified by DP as best innovations

While working in DPs, we focused in some talks and questionnaires on that innovation regarded by the relevant DP as best. Our basis was that DPs generated a large number of outputs during their projects and that it was advisable to gather information on a specific product rather than produce overall information or get an impression as to how the development partnership had been successful in the development of all products. The focus on a single product or process enabled us to gain clear information useful in other evaluation matters, and particularly in the process of identifying the positive and negative factors in innovation development – see below.

Which products or processes are regarded by DPs as best innovations? The answers given by DPs were put to a basic verification, such as the form of an innovation (printed methodology guide, DVDs) or whether or not the innovation had been validated. Consequently, the further overview does not show all the innovation produced by DPs. The examples selected represent types of products as originated in NTN.

Table 5: Examples of products or processes regarded by DPs as best innovations

NTN	
A	<p>A set of methodology tools for special training of small groups of hearing-impaired persons</p> <p>Methodology – long-term retraining modules</p> <p>DVD – Corporate social responsibility</p> <p>A methodology guide for employment counsellors</p>
NTN	
B	<p>Methodologies of self-employment support centres</p> <p>An innovation system supporting employment in the country</p> <p>Advisory centres for self-employed persons that have just started their business</p>
NTN	<p>A theoretical model of a social firm and social firm standards verified in the operation of two social firms</p> <p>An e-learning support training course for full-time social work students</p> <p>A system measure – a legislation provision providing for long-term funding of a mobile hospice from national healthcare insurance – a draft wording to be incorporated in an amendment to the National Healthcare Insurance Act</p> <p>A DVD containing a manual on developing field social services in the country, and a film</p>
C	
NTN	
D	<p>A training module for young people between 13 and 18 in socially excluded areas</p> <p>Outplacement – transfer of information from some EU countries – PL, IT, DE, and FR;</p> <p>Communicating the Outplacement model to target groups through seminars, conferences, publications, and a CD-ROM</p> <p>Educational counselling methodology</p> <p>Family of products INCREASING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE – a comprehensive system of lifelong counselling and training for unemployed persons</p>

	looking after children under 15 years of age, especially mothers after parental leave
	A special course completed with a certified examination to train deaf electrical engineers for examinations on Decree 50/78 Coll.; successful trainees are authorised to work on electrical equipment on their own
NTN E	<p>A Teleworking specifying portal for the intermediation of TW jobs only Portal www.rovensance.cz</p> <p>The PODPORA counselling programme – to verify the personality potential of a CS and facilitate career advancement</p> <p>Methodology and pilot testing of e-learning support in the opening section of a divided first year of an economy bachelor's study programme, combining the non-formal and formal education.</p> <p>The Government Agency of the Year Award</p>
NTN F	<p>A practice book – supplementary learning material for Czech language courses</p> <p>A suite of integration courses</p> <p>Methodology for individual social work</p>

Source: questionnaire survey

Approximately one tenth of the products identified as innovative is focused on changes to environment, with nearly one half focused on the process and the product. Two thirds of these most successful innovations are reported to remove labour market discrimination or inequality; it is surprising that the DP chief representatives were unable to assess this aspect in the remaining innovations. Therefore, a substantial minority of DPs were unable to evaluate the key purpose of CIP EQUAL innovations – to remove labour market discrimination or inequality – even at the time towards the completion of their projects.

The examination of the inequality or discrimination to be removed by the relevant innovation sometimes revealed that the supposed removal was only intuitive or based on experience and unsupported by any empirical analysis of the actual situation. To give an example: after answer 'discrimination by sex' the person was unable to specify or demonstrate how the supposed discrimination was shown in practice.

It is our opinion that given the broad understanding of innovation in the implementation of CIP EQUAL the evaluation question 'Which new products or processes have occurred?' cannot be answered extensively by listing all the items declared as innovation. Methodologies and publications were the most frequent outputs.

Overview of products and processes not identified by DPs as innovations but capable of qualifying as such

Innovation is mandatory and the meeting of the innovativeness principle is part of the description of all activities and the outputs thereof. The pressure in respect of innovation descriptions leads to that innovativeness being attributed to many activities and products

unjustifiably. Consequently, it was rather difficult to identify the products or processes that qualify as innovations although not identified as such by DPs.

Managing authority representatives expressed their belief that there existed interesting products that were not innovative or those that were but failed to be recognised as such by DPs. The remarkable project of the Starý Knín Parish Charity and their objective in a set system in the country in the care for disadvantaged women with another disadvantaged group of elderly people may serve as an example. After a brief examination we found out that also the method of finding jobs for women in the country areas (see the Collection of Products) had been classified as innovative by both the DP and the MA although the DP members conducted themselves not 'innovatively', that is, in a modest way and unpretentiously. By the way, the cited project implemented a very well prepared plan of mainstreaming activities at different levels.

2.4.4 Procedures to Develop and Identify Innovations in DPs

Evaluation question 2: Are adequate procedures used in DP innovation development and identification?

A range of procedures and products may be regarded as innovations in a stricter sense – as something entirely new in the available practice, something of a pioneering nature, 'a brand new approach or a transfer from elsewhere'. The emphasised features are uniqueness and qualitative change rather than just an enrichment of the existing practices, an extension (improvement) of services on the part of the provider, or a procedure not yet tested by the implementer although in use elsewhere.

Some of the DPs surveyed have reported that they consult the degree of innovativeness with NSS. They assess innovativeness by the availability of products and the differences of the existing products in comparison with those produced in their projects. Another criterion of innovativeness applied by DPs is if they find out that there exist no material aimed at their target group or no employment support system in respect of their target group (e.g. microcredit schemes for people running a business in the country).

Below is a selection of answers by representatives of DPs associated in NTN A, B, and C.

Table 6: Examples of projects

<p><i>'Our sociological surveys reveal that the methods we introduce in our project have not yet been used elsewhere. Our talks with experts and field workers at all levels have supported our belief that they see the procedures and products we propose as innovative.'</i></p> <p><i>'It is about the incorporation of specialised palliative home care in national healthcare insurance and the Social Services Act. This would provide a new, user-friendly and professional approach to both the people who are dying and those looking after them at home.'</i></p> <p><i>'It is the only university course of its kind in the Czech Republic; it is based on the current needs in respect of local and regional social services planning, the legislation in force (the Social Services Act, the Ministry of</i></p>

Labour and Social Affairs quality standards, and similar instruments), long-term experience by a social services creator (recipient), community work, and community planning.'

In respect of some products and procedures it is impossible to state clearly the degree of innovativeness in the narrower sense and the extent to which they meet the soft criteria referred to in the previous methodology chapter. The DPs formulate their innovations for example as:

- ***Combining the three main pillars – business, employment, and support, the social firm is a new model for employing the disadvantaged.***
- ***Five consultancy offices for self-employed persons that have recently started their business have been established.***
- ***They are a combination of approaches from different sectors, thus providing a multidisciplinary approach to the integration of the disabled people on the labour market. It has not been a common practice for partners to collaborate in the given field. Also, all material has been prepared around two innovative elements/principles: a principle of work potential functional assessment and a principle of affirmative work recommendation.***
- ***'Our project is innovative in that it identifies the people running a business in the country areas as those disadvantaged on the labour market.'***
- ***Although there are training courses on how to set up and run a business, there are no methodology guides and manuals in this respect. 'Though not entirely new, our products are completed with the necessary and as yet missing methodology and instructions as to how to work with the self-employed.' (The non-existence of methodologies and manuals was not true, although the DP obviously thought it was – evaluator's note.)***

Here is another set of statements to justify the innovativeness of a project's outputs:

- ***DVD – especially the audiovisual form is available to all target groups*** (Note – at best, such a DVD might be a new product for a given target group).
- ***Promoting corporate social responsibility*** (Note – this is quite likely to refer to a novelty in respect of the activities of the recipient).
- ***'In respect of the 50+ employees, we have emphasised the personality development matters, which is not a common aspect in training for this age group. Our second programme combines collective workshops and individual talks. What we see as innovative is that we deal with this theme from the point of view of the employer as well as that of the employee and focus on employed people while most projects focus on the unemployed.'***
- ***'An expert's review was provided in respect of the practice books. Together with the Czech language courses they are unique in the allocated number of classes and the foundation in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The methodology for individual social work is a newly created product the innovative aspects of which lie in skills audit, SWOT analysis, a diplomas and degrees recognition procedure, and retraining courses. All products have been verified in practice over several years, and MISP and the Czech language courses are awaiting the NTN validation process.'***

It is symptomatic that the answers given by DPs place no emphasis on overcoming the labour market inequality or discrimination (and if they do, such emphasis is latent only) and fail to specify the actual practical impacts in removing such inequality or discrimination (at best, there is a potential of these impacts, which, however, have not yet fully manifested themselves).

Frequent products - methodologies

Most projects whose monitoring reports we were examining develop a new procedure or a new product, and methodology for the given innovations is one of the main project outputs. The rationale behind most procedures may be summed up as follows: identify the target group and their problems (based on an analysis, survey, etc.) ➤ draw up methodology for new activities ➤ pilot test activities ➤ review and modify methodology and activities, such as training courses, the services provided for the target groups, as needed ➤ share experience with other organisations ➤ disseminate and mainstream activities.

This general procedure is adequate in respect of innovation development and identification, and is supported in the 2007 common validation methodology. A methodology published by a national supporting structure and a programme's managing authority was the critical precondition for successful validations of tens of products developed during projects implementation.

Table 7: Case study

The project <i>Assistance Centres</i> is a model example of the use of an adequate procedure to develop and identify an innovative product. Launched in 2005, the project was running over 36 months, delivering systematic assistance to women in setting up their businesses and over the first three years of self-employment. The main outputs of the early activities included two analyses mapping the conditions in which women run their businesses in Ireland and a comparative analysis of the conditions in Ireland and those in the Czech Republic.		
The studies surveyed and compared the key aspects of women in business. On the basis of research material and other activities under the Assistance Centre project the development partnership prepared the validation of their product, which is the methodology for the establishment and operation of the assistance centre for target groups.		

Procedures for DPs to identify and verify innovations

We asked in DPs how they knew whether an innovation was successful or not, i.e. how they obtained information about the current state of play. DPs most often rely on continuous feedback from the ultimate users, and often rely on surveys.

Table 8: Methods of assessing an innovation's success

	Quantity	%
By reference to results from previous surveys in target groups	14	48
By conducting and evaluating own surveys	17	59

By searches in available material	6	21
By continuous feedback from target group users	21	72
By publishing a questionnaire on their Internet site	5	17
Other method, such as monitoring the demand for a DVD issued, outcomes of the legislation process, etc.	3	10

Source: questionnaire survey

Neither the managing authority nor NSS assess projects and products from an expert's point of view. They have, however, set up a mechanism with a view to having innovative products. This mechanism consists of the following:

- Evaluation process and criteria in respect of the Action 1 application;
- Action 1 output assessment (DPA), followed by an allocated grant for Actions 2+3. This assessment was rather demanding and included quality questions and criteria. As a result, many DPs had to modify their DPAs, or even extend their Action 1 period. An expert from the NTN activity in round one under CIP EQUAL was involved in the DPA assessment. Also Action 3 criteria were brief and insufficient.
- Another stage of the mechanism is the checking of monitoring reports, inspections on site, and the self-assessment process. All these monitoring and checking processes prevalently examine and assess whether and how the CIP EQUAL principles are followed.
- Any seminars that are held and manuals published by the managing and implementing authorities are also important.
- Also, involvement by MAs and DPs in NTN and presentation of outcomes at CIP EQUAL conferences and seminars are expected and appreciated.
- Product validation process

The managing authority usually accepts what DPs submits and identifies as innovations. It has no tools whereby to prove anything to the contrary. Projects cannot be put to a halt on the grounds that they fail to produce innovative products. The MA urges DPs to specify in more detail in which aspects their projects are innovative. The only sphere of a strong influence is copyright. According to managing authority officers, the selection of projects itself is the critical point in quality identification and development of innovations.

It has been demonstrated in the previous chapter Products and Processes Planning and Development that DPs planned their products and aimed them at specific target groups following an analysis²² of the initial situation or their knowledge of the environment described in their project application. This had set up a benchmark for innovation

²² To demonstrate the substance of the analyses made, they are treated under the fourth evaluation theme relating to innovation quality.

measurement and evaluation, though a benchmark with a strong element of subjectivity. Validation is a qualitative evaluation of a developed product, besides the quantitative indicators referred to in the previous chapter. Involvement in NTN and peer reviews, employed in the validations process, are also among the tools of innovation assessment.

2.4.5 Product Validation as an Innovativeness Verification Tool

In contrast to the original wordings of accepted projects (where the concept of innovation was rather broad and vague) and the ECDB database (which used the data contained in these projects), the validation methodology published in June 2007²³ provided a more unified understanding of innovated projects: *'In order to meet the innovativeness and mainstreaming requirements, CIP EQUAL projects need to focus on creating concrete (tangible) products, i.e. testing and developing new solutions with added value, and achieving a general recognition of these products (contrary to the common approach, which places emphasis on the execution of activities).'*'

Each project proposed must contain innovative elements. All projects will be also evaluated by what innovative elements are proposed in the given field.²⁴

Types of products representing products, process and contexts oriented innovations see in the table below.

Table 9: Examples of projects

In the MOPPS project, delivered by Český svaz žen (Czech Women's Association), the new product is a manual for as yet non-existent day mother services and care of a child in the child's home. The innovative element is particularly the collaboration between parents, the school, and the local authority. 'All-day care centre' is another new service, and its innovativeness lies in that the service is custom-made to the user, including the extent and place of service.²⁵

The MIKROBUS project (applied for by DROM) is another example, and its innovativeness is focused particularly on process aspects. The general innovative products and processes are as follows: 1. training of human resources consultants, 2. a methodology of human resources consultants' job, and 3. a database of vacancies and unemployed persons in target groups.

Jihočeská hospodářská komora (the South Bohemia Region Chamber of Commerce) sees innovativeness especially in combining the non-profit segment with public administration representatives. In their project Merkur, they implemented and identified as innovative the following activities: 1. prepare job methodologies for people setting up their first business, 2. prepare a detailed offer of aftercare for these people, and a job methodology, 3. open BENEFIT points of contact in the Jihočeský Region, 4. a research analytical report, 5. training courses, and 6. an analysis of workshops employing handicapped people.

²³ PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS ČR, s. r. o., MPSV ČR, Metodologie validace produktu, June 2007, updated version of 2008

²⁴ MPSV ČR, Inovativnost v programu EQUAL, 2004

²⁵ Selected interim monitoring reports

In our field research and questioning we focused on the circumstances of validation as the innovation verification process. By the time of our questioning, in March 2008, one third of DPs had had experience with validation while two thirds had not. Three quarters of the former had acted as submitters of projects to be validated whereas the rest of those DPs acted especially as evaluators. It seems that acting as the evaluator might promote the spreading of good practices.

Admittedly, some problems sometimes did occur in the validation process, with one of them being short time for the entire validation procedure (*'the discussion took more time than expected, as also did the filling in of Table C'*). The fundamental problem for parties, however, seemed to be their realisation that it would be rather difficult to fund the activities when their projects were over. This also suggests that the chief validation objective for many DPs was to defend their project outcomes and results rather than prepare them for implementation, spread them and make them to be employed in the regional or national labour market.

Where the questioned organisations submitted no products for validation, this was in most cases caused by the fact that their projects had only been under way by the time of questioning and the DPs had still been preparing validation. Here are some examples cited from their answers:

- *Validation is not critical for our project; we are a consultancy and training firm, so employers' interest is the feedback most important to us.*
- *Validation does not have any practical meaning for us.*
- *Our innovations especially lie in making legislation changes to be adopted; our project is focused on vertical mainstreaming for a pilot project of a mobile hospice, which itself is not included in this grant but was developed and verified over the last five years. The content of our EQUAL project is particularly to lobby the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MPSV), the Ministry of Healthcare (MZd), and the General Healthcare Insurance Company (VZP) with a view to effecting the said amendments to the relevant laws.*
- *We were not interested in validation because our project had been developed by a team of top experts.*

It is obvious that in some cases the authors of innovated products did not identify themselves with validation as a condition for a successful spreading of innovations – they did not need any recognition of their quality. Also, they may have underrated communication with other, potential users of their innovated products or have been uninterested in it on purpose because validation and the following innovation spreading could have deprived them of their 'competitive advantage' over other providers of labour market services.

Seventy-seven products – as specified in the documents delivered by NSSs – were put to validation procedures between September 2007 and 30 June 2008, and we have divided them into five basic classes (see the table).

Methodologies, courses, and information material, respectively, were put to validation in most instances. Overall, they are products that can be easily disseminated especially in the initial phase of horizontal mainstreaming. To assess the extent of the actual spread of the

validated products, however, would go beyond the factual and temporal schemes for this evaluation task.

‘Information material’ comprises new DVDs or CDs and publications. ‘Activities’ comprises web portals, on-line help links, a database of potential employers, the competition Family-friendly Corporation, and similar activities. Although also products, these are not of a one-off nature and are not tangible, but rather span a long period or are periodically renewed through repeated use or updating.

By *centre* or *hatchery* we mean an institution established as a result of a project and the functionality of which was put to validation procedures, or an institution proposed for practical verification. These included organisations such as the Fokus Praha o. s. Social Firm, the Kazuist Social Hatchery, the DVI Employee Support Centre, and the IMPULS SŠT Most consultancy and information offices. Usually, they represent qualitatively extended functions of the parent organisation, which developed and validated the product, rather than new organisations of legal personality.

Table 10: Validated products

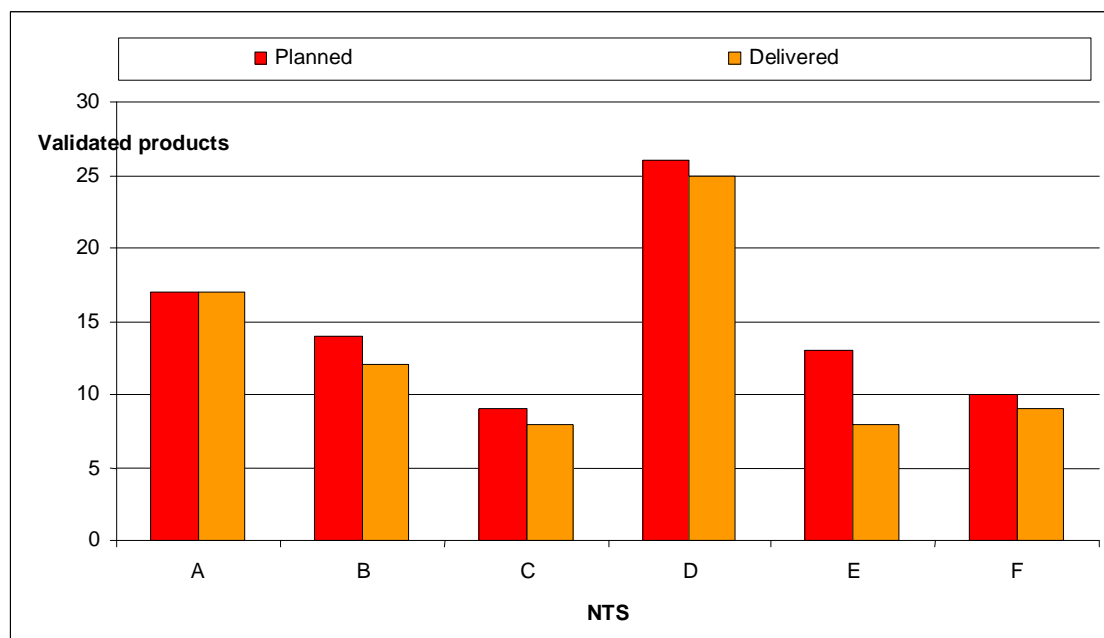
NTN	Total products	Product type				
		Methodology	Course	DVD, CD, publication	Activity	Centre, hatchery
A	15	10	0	2	3	0
B	12	3	6	2	0	1
C	8	0	1	1	3	3
D	25	3	10	7	3	2
E	8	3	0	1	1	3
F	9	3	0	3	2	1
Total	77	22	17	16	12	9

Source: MPSV, 2008

According to the data of the CIP EQUAL managing authority on validated products, a total of 42 development partnerships have validated a total of 79 developed products whereas in respect of 42 products validation procedures were not applied or planned, or the relevant DP expressed no opinion as to validation. These are the data valid as at 15 July 2008 and this date was the reference date for the following assessment and charts. As all DPs will finish their activities by the end of June or July 2008, we do not expect the number of validated products to increase significantly.

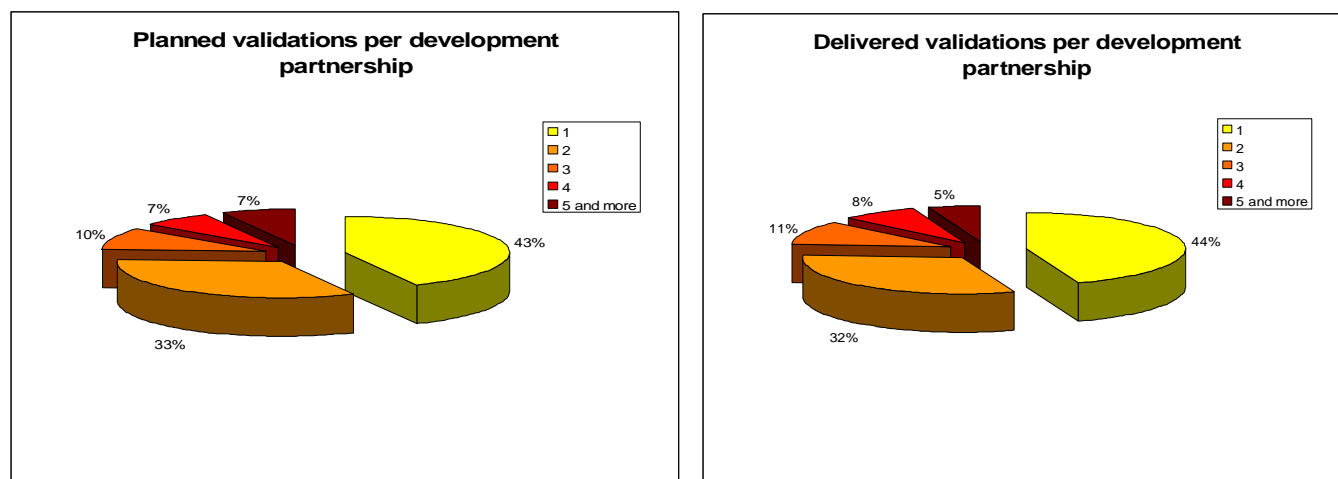
Most validated products have been developed by DPs in NTN D, particularly thanks to the DP Free Art Records (nine validated products), and the DP EDOST in NTN A (five validated products).

Chart 1: Planned/Delivered validations by NTN



Source: Validation Survey, MPSV, 2008

Chart 2: Planned/Delivered validations per development partnership



Source: Validation Survey, MPSV, 2008

Nearly a half of the validating DPs (44%) validated a single product only, one third of the DPs validated two products, 11 and 8% of DPs validated three and four products, respectively, and 5% of DPs validated five or more products.

When finishing their projects, many organisations apply with the managing authority for a certification of performed validation of their products, perhaps to use it as a marketing material and a certificate of quality of the given product.

Innovation spreading

The questioned people from DPs gave very optimistic answers as to whether or not their principal innovation had been disseminated and mainstreamed. As many as 43% of DPs reported yes in both dissemination and mainstreaming, one third reported dissemination, but every fourth principal innovation failed to have been either disseminated or mainstreamed²⁶ by the time of survey (March 2008).

These optimistic self-assessments are in conflict with another finding that only every fourth most important innovation was or is used by other organisations or in other regions. At the same time, in nearly half of the cases recipient organisations or regions are making preparations to adopt a foreign innovation, and no such adoption has been implemented or signalled in respect of one third of innovations.

It seems, therefore, that a significant number of implementing organisations and their DPs have employed their innovations especially in their own practice without being able or willing to offer or make them established on the labour market.

2.4.6 Geographical Impact of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic

This chapter contains the assessment of the potential geographical effect of the CIP EQUAL projects delivered in the Czech Republic at regional and district levels. A total of 74 projects have been assessed by their regional impact as given in the MONIT IS MSSF as at 8 September 2008.

In terms of geographical impact, 45% of projects provide activities with impact on a single region at regional level, 34% of projects provide activities with impact on more than a single region, and 13% of total projects are delivered in the Capital City of Prague. On average, each project has its activities in four regions of this level.

²⁶ Only a single innovation out of the 32 reviewed was implemented as a system change on the labour market, a change in a regional authority policy, a legislation change, etc. (Hospicové občanské sdružení Cesta domů).

Figure 1 Geographical Impact of CIP EQUAL Activities at Regional Level

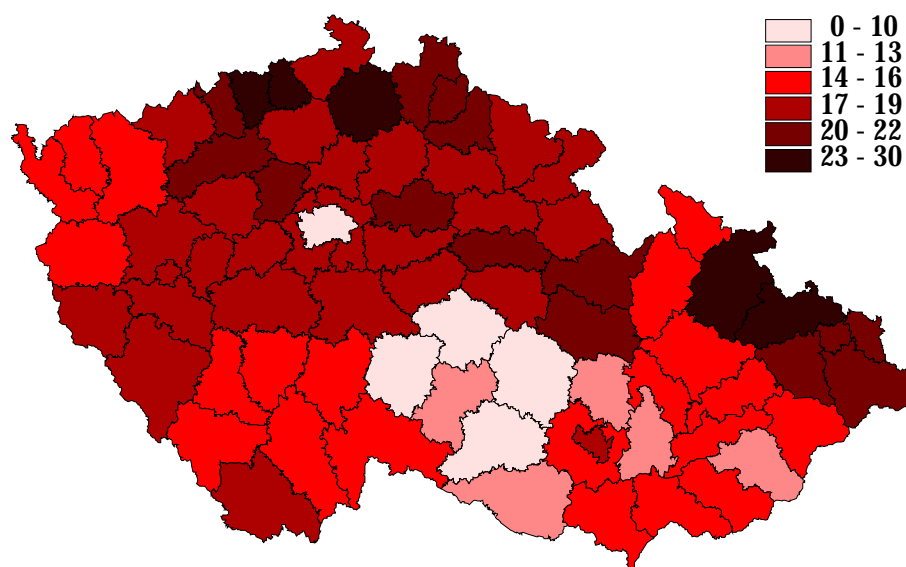


Source: prepared by author using the geographical information system and the data from the Monit IS MSSF

At regional level, most project activities have been identified in the Ústecký Region and the Moravskoslezský Region. This should be attributed particularly to the experience of local and regional stakeholders with obtaining money from the European funds available in the pre-accession period (Phare programmes, and Phare CBC) or in the programme period 2004–2006. These results clearly show that most support is provided for economically weak regions or regions with poor economic infrastructure and a high unemployment rate. Another significant factor is the support to these regions under Czech regional policy defined in Act 248/2000 Sb. on support to regional development, in which the said regions are specified as those with concentrated government support.

At district level, most support is provided for the districts along the national border in the Ústecký Region, the Moravskoslezský Region, and the Liberecký Region. Most projects are delivered in the following districts: Opava, Bruntál, Ústí nad Labem, Česká Lípa, Liberec, Semily, and Pardubice. These are usually districts with a lower economic level and an unemployment rate over the average. The low number of projects delivered in the districts in the Vysočina Region is relatively surprising given their ample experience with obtaining money from the ‘wealthier’ operational programmes, which, in fact, might be one of the main causes.

Figure 2 Geographical Impact of CIP EQUAL Activities at District Level



Source: prepared by author using the geographical information system and the data from the Monit IS MSSF

Regional differentiation is influenced by a range of further factors, with the most significant being the following:

- Experience of local and regional stakeholders with using public interventions
- Degree of involvement in contact networks
- Skills and competence of the people working for non-profit organisations.

The variability of surveyed phenomena increases with a decreasing order level (Hampl, 2005)²⁷; still, no significant regional differences in this order level have been observed. This could be attributed to that most projects are delivered in more than a single district (at regional level, usually) and to unreliability of the input data. Except the projects delivered under Objective 3, only 12% of projects have geographical impact in a single district according to the MSSF MONIT IS. In terms of the regional impact of CIP EQUAL, the vast majority of projects are delivered in the administrative centre of a district level area.

²⁷ Hampl, M. (2005): Geografická organizace společnosti v České republice: transformační procesy a jejich obecný kontext. Praha, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Přírodovědecká fakulta, Katedra sociální geografie a regionálního rozvoje, 147 p.

Generally speaking, the regional differentiation is affected by not only the horizontal, but also the vertical geographical position – CIP EQUAL projects are also disseminated hierarchically, therefore the extent of support from CIP EQUAL decreases with a decreasing settlement order level.

Given the data base, in which potential impact is entered by CIP EQUAL recipients, it is not possible to identify geographical impacts in detail. This could be treated under an in-depth regional analysis carried out after some time; such an analysis would investigate into not only where projects were delivered but also where their outcomes were disseminated to.

NTN activity at regional level

Association of development partnerships at regional level has not spread in the Czech Republic very much, and even single NTNs failed to provide any major support at regional level. DP representatives preferred their own contacts and personal discussions for horizontal and vertical mainstreaming and to promote their activities and address target group representatives. With respect to the application of outcomes at regional or local level DPs carried out these activities along their own line and that of their partners, without using the NTN environment to any substantial degree to that end.

2.4.7 Overview of sectors relevant in respect of the impact or potential impact of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic

It is obvious that all recipients come within the services sector, given the overall focus of CIP EQUAL. They may be educational and training organisations, civic associations, or public administration institutions.

Division by sector is not relevant in this case because the target groups, with these typically being the long-term unemployed, socially excluded persons or other socially disadvantaged groups, are outside the labour market.²⁸

To give an example, we may refer to the social economy oriented NTN C projects. The project of the Hefaistos DP and its outcome *Příručka přístupu k řešení problematiky zaměstnávání osob ohrožených sociálním vyloučením* (Manual on an approach to addressing the issues in employing persons at risk of social exclusion) for local authorities and non-government non-profit organisations. Appendix 1 shows a list of particularly suitable job positions divided by disability, from persons with chronic diseases to physically handicapped, mentally handicapped, persons with sight or hearing impairment etc. The number of suitable branches and types of job is enormous, covering manufacturing, services, agriculture, and other industries.

For this reason, in our opinion, the target groups of CIP EQUAL projects (primary and secondary) can find employment in virtually all sectors – i.e. primary, secondary, and in the

²⁸ Chapter 2.2.5 of the analytical section of CIP EQUAL contains support for lifelong learning and practices leading to employment of people at a risk of discrimination and inequality in relation to the labour market according to ÚIV (2002)

service sector to the largest extent. In some instances, such as NTN F, the quaternary sector may be applicable as well.

Consequently, it would not be of much relevance to define sectors in accordance with the classification of economic activities pursuant to the valid methodology CZ – NACE. This is demonstrated in the identified impacts on legislation and the relevant policies referred to in Chapter 7. Moreover, the temporal aspect must be taken into account – the impacts on sectors (if any) will only be identifiable as late as several years after the end of a programme

2.4.8 Overview of public programme interventions relevant in respect of the impact or potential impact of CIP EQUAL

Given its volume, we have moved the overview in the last chapter of the evaluation chapter to the innovativeness principle, and divided it into two parts. Part one is titled ‘The projection of the innovativeness principle in selected operational programmes for the period 2007–2013’, focusing on the innovativeness principle in the operational programmes Praha Adaptability, Human Resources and Employment, Education and Training for Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovations, and Regional Operational Programmes. In view of the strongly applied principle of innovation support, in both the technical and non-technical sense, in the Leader priority, we have also touched on the Country Development Programme. The emphasis on innovations, however, is a requirement following from the Community General Strategic Guidelines and other programme documents of the EU and the Czech Republic, rather than a consequence of CIP EQUAL mainstreaming. Innovations are subject to monitoring indicators and selection criteria. The whole family of OPs have a ‘pro-innovative’ orientation.

In the next part of this chapter the following areas are discussed: assessment of the relevance of CIP EQUAL thematic priorities in respect of the National Employment Action Plan; the ties of CIP EQUAL to the Employment Act (Act no. 435/2004 Coll.); targeted programmes at regional level; and the SROP and OP RLZ structural funds for 2004–2006.

2.4.9 Evaluation Theme 1 Summary and Conclusions

To sum up, most outputs and outcomes of the projects which received support are oriented on innovations in a broader sense, which may be defined as follows:

- *A new or untried procedure in the recipient’s practice;*
- *A different method of executing existing activities;*
- *Additional value added to existing services or products.*

Development partnerships did not strictly associate their innovations with the emphasis to overcome inequality or discrimination on the labour market, enforce their innovations or effect practical changes in removing such inequality or discrimination. DPs understood innovations in the sense that it is sufficient to propose something new (new in respect of the applicant’s experience), and possibly promote it for further use.

DPs often tended to understand innovations intuitively, as something new to the recipient, something that *‘must be implemented in any case’* in the given project.

Many new products have been produced and many processes developed under CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic. Development partnerships, however, used a vague and unclear definition of innovation. As a result, their practice showed signs of massive reduction of their demands on the nature of their innovations and different ways of understanding the innovativeness of their overall results. Most of them are innovations in the broad sense – new products or processes in the activities of the implementing organisation or the activities in the given region, such as publications and training courses, discussions with target group representatives, or new organisation of their own work. With respect to the experience of evaluators and MA officers it is legitimate to express a belief that the difference between innovative programme projects and non-innovative programme projects revealed by a comparison of the final products of CIP EQUAL projects with those of the OP RLZ projects may be negligible.²⁹

Consequently, such innovations are innovations only in respect of the activities of the implementing organisations, and, although their common impact actually is improvements for the CIP EQUAL target groups in their position on the labour market, it cannot be held that every single innovation has demonstrably affected the labour market in the sense of having been adopted in mainstreaming (with mainstreaming understood for this purpose as the implementation of verified innovative project outputs in employment practice and policies of public administration authorities or agencies).

There were only a few innovations in this narrow sense – an innovation as a change in a process, product or environment that is demonstrably capable of removing discrimination or inequality on the labour market, or has been tested and spread or even introduced to strategies and procedures of the public administration or other service providers on the labour market.

An analysis of 77 validated products has shown that methodologies, courses, and information material (especially publications), respectively, were validated in most instances. Overall, they are products that can be easily disseminated especially in the initial phase of horizontal mainstreaming.

The innovations identified by DPs as crucial, successfully tested, validated and disseminated include a similar number of product-oriented and process-oriented innovations and a lower number (approximately 10%) of innovations oriented on environment changes. One third of DPs, however, had been unable to say, by the final project phase, whether or not their innovation contributed to removing discrimination or inequality on the labour market, and the evaluators themselves were unable to gather and assess the required field information. In a significant number of instances, the implementing organisations and their DPs introduced the innovation they had developed to their own practice, especially, and were not able or willing to offer it for further application or go on to enforce it on the labour market.

²⁹ An Action 3 project *Ženský element* (Feminine Element) may be an example. The project disseminates good practices of projects of other programmes (CIP Equal, RLZ OP, or Phare). There are no apparent differences in the quality and innovativeness of the projects disseminated through the development partnership.

The relevant tool for innovation identification was the product validation methodology published in June 2007 by the national support structure and the programme managing authority. Sadly, many DPs understood validation as an opportunity for them to defend their project outputs and outcomes rather than make preparations for further dissemination and enforcement on the labour market. Some DPs failed to perceive validation as a precondition for the recognition of innovation quality and successful dissemination of innovations.

Development partnerships monitor how successful their innovations are. They usually do so by asking their target group for feedback on a continuous basis rather than by using more sophisticated tools such as surveys or searches.

The most innovative products were developed by the DPs in NTN D; also, these DPs validated the most products in respect of the theme adaptability and lifelong learning support. Aimed at various CIP EQUAL target groups, the projects are concerned with the development of e-learning educational courses and programmes in the fields of retraining, soft skills, and competences transferability for the labour market. Many validated and other products were developed by the DPs in NTN A concerning better accessibility and return to employment for persons with impaired integration potential. These projects were often concerned with the development of methodologies for employment consultants, counselling programmes for people with medical disability, web portals, and other counselling methodologies.

2.5 Evaluation theme 2: Identification of positive factors in innovative tool development

The task to identify and appraise the positive factors leading to the development of innovative tools under CIP EQUAL is designed as answers to four evaluation question phases. We used the data from question phase 1 in order to facilitate better evaluation of the first two evaluation questions. We worked with answers by 151 respondents, DPs members, and a set of questions focused on innovation success factors. In addition, we used phase 2 of questioning in 33 development partnerships and the information produced in stage 2 of CIP EQUAL continuous assessment. The documents and surveys analysis carried out in development partnerships is completed with information obtained in controlled interviews with DPs, representatives of national thematic networks, and officers of the managing authority and the national support group.

2.5.1 Motivation for Innovation Development, and Success Factors

The outcome of project implementation – i.e. a developed and tested innovative tool – is predetermined by the motivation for organisations to get involved in CIP EQUAL. Focus on new services or new target groups is reflected in procedures other than efforts to effect changes to the laws, regulations or procedures used by the public administration on the labour market. For this reason, we asked 32 development partnership representatives what had been the decisive reason for them to get involved in CIP EQUAL. Usually, they gave answers in the sense of efforts to improve some activities in their own practice or improve their own offer:

Table 11: Reasons of DPs for involvement in CIP EQUAL

	Answers	%
They wanted to improve something (new services, new target groups, improvements in existing services, and similar motivation)	26	82
They were aware of a legislation drawback or gap that might be addressed with the Equal project.	2	6
They needed funds for existing activities, to which they would add new activities and goals.	3	9
Other reasons	1	3

Source: questionnaire survey

In the previous section we presented the best innovations, to which we obtained additional information through questionnaire surveys, and in *Innovation Factors* we outlined our approach to the initial classification and appraisal of innovation factors. We applied this approach to questionnaires. DP representatives were asked to specify, in respect of each factor provided, its significance in the development of a specific innovation.

Table 12: What made your innovation successful? (%)

	A	B	C	D
The original idea was very good.	56	35	3	6
Development, preparations, and verification were rigorous and creative.	56	34	3	7
The product (process) was clearly connected with the interests and needs of ultimate users (clients).	84	13	3	0
The product (service or process) generated new demand (e.g. clients had not demanded a service of that kind before but showed a major interest after the service started to be offered).	41	38	21	0
The product was presented, disseminated and offered very effectively.	40	46	7	7

We effectively collaborated with all the parties capable of introducing the innovation to practice, such as labour offices, education and training agencies, employers, or NTN.	39	50	7	4
Good timing (we introduced the innovation when there had been a latent demand, but no similar offer from other providers).	46	29	14	11

Key: A – Major to decisive significance; B – Partial but noticeable significance; C – No or very little significance; D – Not sure, unable to say

Source: questionnaire survey

The surveys in the DPs have revealed the interest and need of the ultimate users and clients (i.e. the ultimate client orientation) as the principal factor which helped innovations to be developed. The ultimate client orientation is the most effective simple (non-composite) marketing strategy.

Table 13: examples of projects

‘We responded to the demand in the society suggested in the initial sociological research and demo probes, and on the basis of our long-term experience as a non-government organisation monitoring the needs and requirements of women.’ (ČSZ)

The DP NÁVRATY was based on a previous multi-source analysis identifying the most-felt barriers to access of the target groups to the labour market in the Ústecký Region, and on the needs of the identified target groups (through questionnaire surveys) (the Most – Velebudice Secondary Technical School).

The factors perceived as of the least significance were organisational factors (the collaboration of stakeholders in introducing an innovation and its suitable timing), an organisation’s ability to create a new market (i.e. generate demand for a new product or service), and marketing focus or innovation presentation and dissemination. It may be advisable that the innovation-developing organisations be enabled in next period to learn to use the combined tools to put innovations into practice.

Communicating innovations factor

European Union documents as well as foreign documents on CIP EQUAL contain an emphasis on understanding innovation as an interactive process. This approach defines innovation as a complex of relations at different levels and with a large volume of contacts, networking, and correlations.³⁰

In this sense the experts involved in stage 2 of CIP EQUAL evaluation, also, suggested recommendations for DPs as to communication with others so that new ideas and tools could be used in the areas covered by CIP EQUAL. Obviously, it is not practicable to strictly

³⁰ Second Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, Final report, 2006

separate internal and external factors because it is important for innovations to be promoted through DPs, MA, or NTNs.

For most of the DP institutions and organisations, including those with experience with European projects and international collaboration at various levels, involvement of target groups in the very making of decisions about the project or component activities thereof is a new tool, to which they are able to adopt an effective attitude only after their projects are under way. At first, the effective attitude was reflected in setting a working communication between partners, with making provisions for or involving the target groups and their needs following not until further phases.

International collaboration, and innovation

Surprisingly, the role of international partners in TCA is seen as important in respect of innovation development and delivery by a relatively low percentage of respondents (36%). This figure agrees with an interesting judgement by an experienced NTN chairperson, who regards international collaboration as very important but underused, to the detriment of many DPs as well as the programme as a whole.

The EQUAL initiative emphasises international collaboration as a significant contribution in order to establish innovative approaches, spread good experience, and propose improved policies targeted particularly on the labour market. Interviews conducted in the previous CIP EQUAL evaluation stages have revealed that most Czech development partnerships perceive international collaboration as a tool whereby to access and draw on the experience of international partners. An international partner is appraised as suitable provided it is involved in a similar or identical project and is likely to be a source of methodological inspiration or to be able to verify abroad the tools developed by the Czech party (abroad from the point of view of the Czech partner). The specific methods of securing added project valued include the following: sharing of experience, joint seminars/workshops, case studies, and international meetings³¹.

2.5.2 Support to Institutions in Innovation Management and Implementation

Which organisations helped development partnerships in innovation implementation most? Quite frequently among these were labour offices, the national support structure, local government and local authorities and also (surprisingly frequent) the TCA international partners.

The overview clearly shows that no type of organisation was a dominant helper in innovation implementation. This is particularly interesting in relation to labour offices, NSSs, professional chambers and associations, other NNOs and national thematic networks because these are likely to be expected to play a key role in innovation initiation and support. We attribute the overall results to a weak activity on the part of both DPs

³¹ Second Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, Final report, 2006

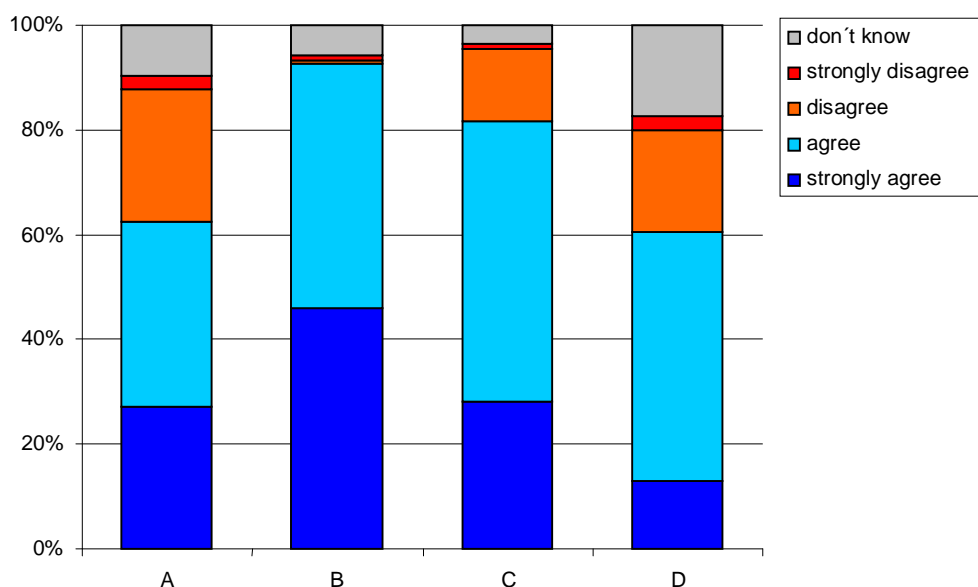
(which, perhaps, did not always ask for assistance) and the related organisations (which, as it may seem, quite often did not know about or were uninterested in the innovation activities)

³².

The chart below shows the answers to the four most common methods. The columns mean the following:

- A) Involvement of target groups in project management
- B) Regular comment procedure by DP partners
- C) Inspiration and consulting with international partners
- D) Outside partners to DP organisations.

Chart 3: What was an aid to innovative tool development in respect of project management?



Source: questionnaire survey

It is clear that the involvement of target group in project management, regular comment procedure by DP partners, getting inspiration from and consulting with international partners, as well as collaboration with outside partners to DP organisations do facilitate the

³² In this case also we would have to conduct extensive empirical surveys in the whole Czech Republic to verify such an assumption, that is, surveys in hundreds of organisations which might be of assistance according to the place and the nature of innovation. Such verification is impossible for organisational, and especially time and financial reasons.

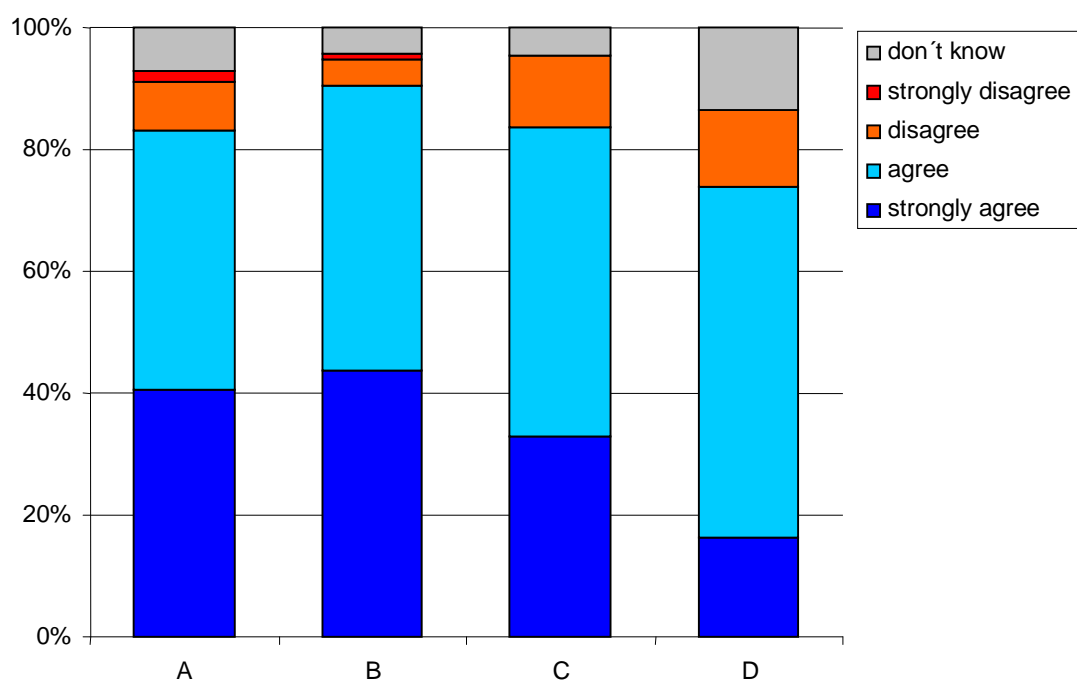
development of innovative tools in respect of project management. All the methods listed are positively appraised in more than a half of cases, but regular comments by DP partners are regarded critical, as agreed by 91% of respondents.

Respecting the interests and needs of target groups in innovation development (see the previous evaluation question) does not mean, however, that these groups would be directly involved in project management, or imply anything about whether or not their involvement would be beneficial to innovative tool development. Questionnaire 1 for on-line completion was used to assess this influence and the influence of other organisations.

DP reported the following among the other factors facilitating innovation development: their own experience and the experience of the experts in the given DP; project evaluation; good practice examples; foreign study trips; close collaboration of experts within a partnership; inspiration by international sources; the Internet monitoring of the global development in the given field; benchmarking; conferences, and workshops.

Similar results have been obtained in the question What was an aid to innovative tool development in respect of project implementation? The key to columns is the same as with the previous chart.

Chart 4: What was an aid to innovative tool development in respect of project implementation?



Source: questionnaire survey

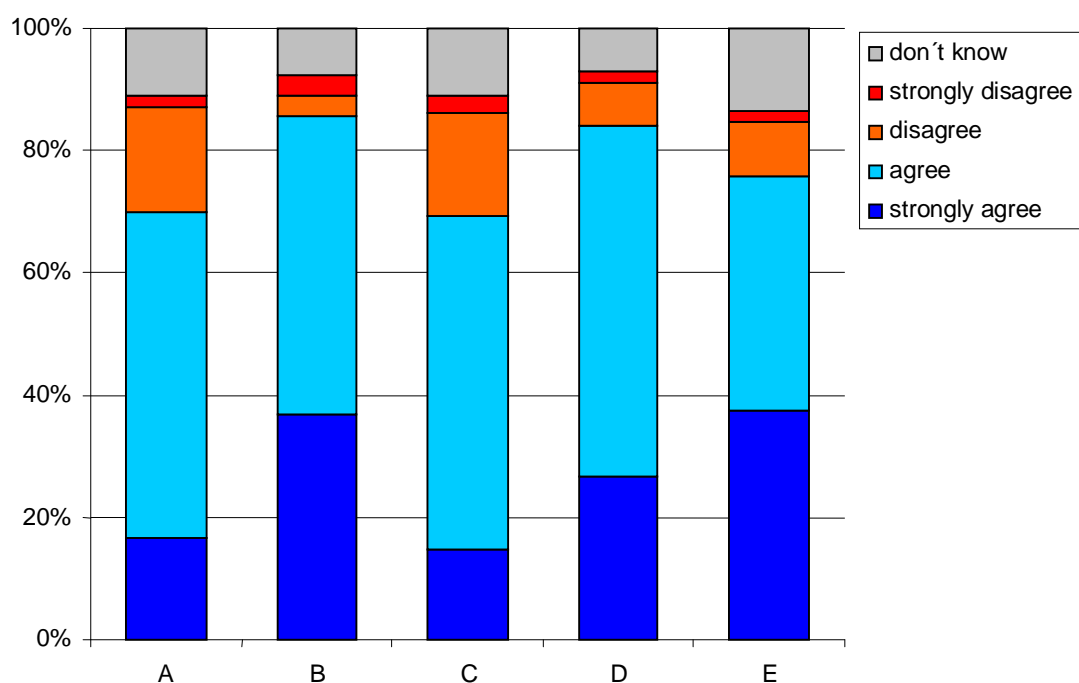
A vast majority of DPs (74–91%) report that innovative tool development in project implementation is facilitated by all the methods listed – involvement of target groups in project implementation, regular comment procedure by DP partners, inspiration by and consulting with international partners, and collaboration with outside partners to the DP organisations.

DPs stated the following among other specific factors: the needs of target groups; experience with other CIP EQUAL projects in the context of various networks and collaboration and consulting within the NTN; foreign study visits; close collaboration of experts within a partnership; Czech Statistical Office statistics; analyses by *Rada vlády pro národnosti* (Government Council for Nationalities); monitoring of the current situation in the given field; exchange of experience; press monitoring; and benchmarking against agencies or authorities of the same level.

2.5.3 Impact of Activities by MA, NSSs, NTNs, and Other Institutions

According to the chart representing which activities by MA, NSSs, or NTN, and to what extent, strengthen innovative tool effectiveness, the most important ones are seminars (column B), personal consultation (column E), and on-line material (column D):

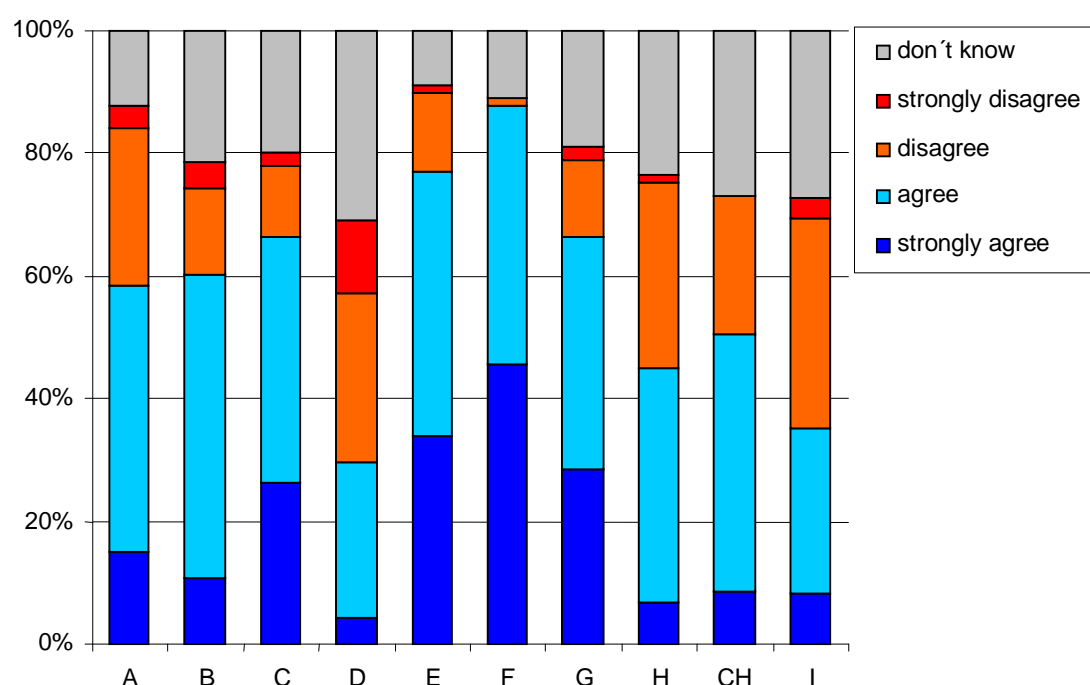
Chart 5: Which activities strengthen innovative tool effectiveness



Source: questionnaire survey

Which institutions added to innovative tool effectiveness most? The following chart shows that given the aggregate of both affirmative answers non-government agencies involved in DPs (column F) and public and central administration authorities involved in DPs (column E) are those rated best:

Chart 6: Which institutions added to innovative tool effectiveness most?



Key: (A) managing authority; (B) NSSs; (C) NTN; (D) other ministries; (E) public or central administration authorities involved in DPs; (F) non-governmental organisations involved in DPs; (G) private sector involved in DPs; (H) public or central administration authorities outside DPs; (CH) non-governmental organisations outside DPs; (I) private sector outside DPs

Source: questionnaire survey

Non-governmental non-profit organisations directly involved in DPs are the organisations that have been best appreciated in terms of their contribution to innovative tool development and use, with mark '1 – strongly agree' being the most frequent evaluation and 88% of respondents having given mark 1 or 2.

On the other hand, the following organisations were assessed as those with the lowest contribution on average: the ministries other than the MPSV (their agenda, however, was

in most cases irrelevant to the project in question), then the private sector outside DPs ³³ (by definition, this sector, aimed at realising sales and generating profit, is the least interested in supporting social inclusion), and authorities outside DPs.

The point is not that these institutions would have a negative impact. The question was formulated in such a way to invite DP representatives to express how much they agreed to the statement that the institution in question added to innovative tool effectiveness.

The institution rated as the fourth worst in respect of its contribution was the MPSV as the CIP EQUAL managing authority. Setting aside the 'I do not know' answers, the following evaluation percentages within a total of 93 DP representatives have been obtained:

Although the evaluation of the managing authority prevailingly contains affirmative answers, it received the highest number of negative marks in the group of the relevant public administration authorities. Admittedly, the negative attitude of the general public in the Czech Republic to central government authorities is common knowledge.

2.5.4 Overall Evaluation of the Impact of Institutions and Activities

What facilitated innovative tool development most? For our evaluation we have used the respective average marks received by all 25 items specified in the questionnaire in this respect. The factors with the highest degree of positive impact are in yellow whereas those with the lowest degree are represented in green.

The respondents answered by giving marks: 1 – strongly agree; 2 – agree; 3 – disagree; and 4 – strongly disagree. These marks can be dealt with similarly as classification at school. Marks 5 – do not know, and 6 – not applicable to us were not included in our calculations for obvious reasons.

The answers obtained allow us to calculate the mean values – average and median – although 40–89 respondents failed to provide an answer in isolated cases (recalculation to a total of 151).

Table 14: What facilitated innovative tool development most?

Sub-question	Answers	Average Mark
management innovation – target groups	103	2.04
management innovation – partner comments	111	1.54
management innovation – consulting abroad	110	1.87
management innovation – outside partners	90	2.14
implementation innovation – target groups	105	1.69
implementation innovation – partner comments	108	1.58

³³ The median in these two groups is the value 3 – 'disagree', which, given the low return of mark 4, is a sign of low perceived importance of these institutions in relation to support to innovative tools development.

implementation innovation – consulting abroad	105	1.80
implementation innovation – outside partners	90	1.96
strengthening activities – manuals	97	2.05
strengthening activity – seminars	108	1.71
strengthening activities – publications	96	2.08
strengthening activity – on-line material	104	1.83
strengthening activities – personal consultations	90	1.71
strengthening organisation – managing authority	93	2.20
strengthening organisation – NSS	73	2.15
strengthening organisation – NTN	76	1.87
strengthening organisation – other ministries (median = 3)	63	2.68
strengthening organisation – authorities involved in DPs	91	1.79
strengthening organisation – NNO involved in DPs (median = 1)	88	1.50
strengthening organisation – private sector in DPs	77	1.86
strengthening organisation – authorities outside DPs	68	2.34
strengthening organisation – NNO outside DPs	68	2.19
strengthening organisation – private sector outside DPs (median = 3)	62	2.45

Source: questionnaire survey

The main conclusions in respect of the above table are as follows:

- The elements most helpful to innovative tool development in project management were partner comments and consulting abroad.
- Those most helpful in implementation were partner comments and involvement of target groups.
- Innovative tool effectiveness was most strengthened by seminars and consultations organised by the MA, NSSs, or NTNs.
- As regards institutions, Innovative tool effectiveness was most strengthened by non-government non-profit organisations involved in DPs.

- Innovative tool effectiveness was relatively least strengthened by ministries other than the MPSV, private sector, authorities outside DPs, and the managing authority.

The ‘average’ evaluation of NTN impact might be attributed to the different amount of activity and the degree of accomplishment by the NTNs as it is beyond doubt that the NTN as a whole improved product quality, information spreading, and, in some cases, helped in the preparations for validation procedures.

2.5.5 Analysis by Theme – NTN

What are the differences between respondents from different NTNs and with different DP roles in how they rate innovation supporting factors? To investigate into this, we used the arithmetic averages of all ratings in all sub-questions and all groups by DP role and by NTN. Overall we had 250 averages (for each group). While analysing the statistical variance we tested the statistical significance of the differences between the averages, and, as expected, the significance varies to a larger extent (e.g. the F significance varies between 0.010 and 0.805 for NTNs) and the Eta coefficient (supposing an equidistant scale) is between 0.2 and 0.4.

The results obtained are summarised in the overview (see Appendix, Table 10 – What are the differences between respondents with different DP roles in how they rate innovation supporting factors?), with the ‘excessively’ deviated highlighted in colour – the average scores and those under or equal to 1.5 in green, and the scores equal to or over 2.5 in red. The results selected this way show that the worst rating as an innovation strengthening organisation was received by the managing authority from DP leading partners, and the NTN C members in particular. Similarly, personal consultation with the MPSV, NSSs and NTNs is rated as very poor by the NTN F members (it is likely that this rating only relates to the activity of the NTN rather than other authorities) whereas the members of the NTNs A, B, and E rate it as very useful on average.

Also, we may analyse the results by column, therefore observing that the NTN E respondents rate the role of outside partners and the managing authority more critically than the average rating but appraise positively personal consultation (but only starting at the aggregate MA + NSS + NTN) and authorities and NNOs involved in DPs.

We must take into account, however, the different number of assessments in each sub-question by members of a single NTN or a single respondent group. Generally speaking, low numbers of answers express low stability (reliability) of results. In order to avoid lengthy interpretations of the standard deviations obtained in respect of the average numbers, we should treat the sub-results as for orientation only, given the selection made by the respondents themselves and the poll-like nature of the questionnaire survey.

Results summarised: Key to answer codes: 1 – leading partner; 2 – leading partner and sub-activity implementer; 3 – partner and coordinator of a sub-programme/activity; and 4 – partner and sub-activity implementer. The left column corresponds to the sub-questions listed above.

2.5.6 Evaluation Theme 2 Summary and Conclusions – Impact of External and Internal Factors

The main reason for organisations to get involved in CIP EQUAL was efforts to improve some activities in their own practice. The main factor that contributed to innovations development was the interest and the need of final users and clients.

The organisations that relatively most often helped development partnerships in the use of innovations were labour offices, the national support structure, local government (i.e. municipal authorities), and international partners in TCA. None of these, however, was helpful in most cases, as reported by DPs.

For project management, regular comments from DP partners were critical. For project implementation, all the principal methods were used rather evenly: involvement of target groups, regular comments from DP partners, inspiration and consultations with international partners, and collaboration with outside partners.

For most DP institutions and organisations, direct involvement of target groups in making decisions about the project or the sub-activities thereof was a new tool, which they were actually learning to use in the process of implementation.

Innovative tool effectiveness was strengthened especially by seminars, personal consulting, and on-line material, as far as the activities by the MA, NSSs, and NTN C are concerned, and supported by non-government non-profit organisations, the public and central government authorities involved in DPs.

- On the other hand, the following organisations were assessed as those with the lowest contribution on average: the ministries other than the MPSV (their agenda, however, was in most cases irrelevant to the project in question), then the private sector outside DPs (by definition, this sector, aimed at realising sales and generating profit, is the least interested in supporting social inclusion), and authorities outside DPs.
- The institution rated as the fourth worst in respect of its contribution was the CIP EQUAL managing authority. Even though the majority of feedback on the managing authority account for affirmative answers, one third of DP representatives disagree with the statement that the managing authority strengthens innovation tool effectiveness. In terms of an organisation strengthening innovation effectiveness, the managing authority received the worst rating from DP leading partners, and the NTN C members in particular. This is rather surprising because the managing authority had established a close mainstreaming collaboration with the NTN C.

What facilitated innovative tool development most?

- The elements most helpful to innovative tool development in project management were partner comments and consulting abroad.
- Those most helpful in implementation were partner comments and involvement of target groups.

- Innovative tool effectiveness was most reinforced by seminars and consultations organised by the MA, NSSs, or NTN.
- As regards institutions, Innovative tool effectiveness was most strengthened by non-government non-profit organisations involved in DPs.
- Innovative tool effectiveness was relatively least strengthened by ministries other than the MPSV, private sector, authorities outside DPs, and the managing authority.

2.5.7 Term of Project Impact on Innovation Development

Evaluation Question 3: Did the term of project have positive impact on innovative tool development?

To answer this question, we used the findings established during controlled interviews with the officers of the MA, NSSs, NTN, and selected DPs, and those revealed by cross questions in both of the questionnaire surveys. The case studies referred to at the end of the chapter are accompanied by further good practice examples in the appendix.

As expected, the term of project was relevant for innovations development. This conclusion, however, is based on statements made by DPs themselves because an objective verification of this conclusion would not be possible without experimental concurrent implementation of selected innovations for a shorter and a longer period under identical conditions.

In our on-line questionnaire 86% of 120 DP representatives answered that the term of project had had a positive impact on innovative tool development, adding that they had been able, over the term of project, to test their innovative tools and adjust them to the needs of the target group. They were gaining new experience, which they could use in their following activities.

The team expertise was increasing, and many changes failed to be conceived until the project was put into practice. At least three years of stabilisation of the working team and the organisation's think tank, and enough time to reject ineffective methods and to find out those effective were seen as advisable. DP appreciated that they had been able not only to develop their innovative tools over the term of project, but also test them directly on their target group. Pilot test results enabled them to adjust the final version of their tools (courses, for instance). Controlled interviews with DP representatives have revealed identical conclusion.

According to information from NSSs, approximately 40 projects span three years (August 2005–August 2008), which is the maximum project implementation term. Many DPs appreciated the possibility of having their term of project extended by some time, such as 1–6 months. In this extended period, they did their essential validation and mainstreaming activities. The most frequent reasons for term of project prolongation were a delay in the scheduled performance, and the difficulties of the validation process and mainstreaming activities, but not innovation development. In many cases, however, we can observe efforts to conclude the innovation cycle by introducing the innovations to the market,

disseminating, and mainstreaming. Then, the success factor transforms into the ability to lobby, network, address the key players, involve target groups, and get feedback.

The three-year term of project implementation was beneficial also in terms of international collaboration. It was possible to integrate TCA suggestions and verify them in practice. Also interesting was the benefit from TCA in approaches of the countries involved in a project, and in the translation of know-how by consulting and good practices.³⁴ On the other hand, the demanding preparatory work and the administration load in overall transnational development partnership co-ordination require a lot of time, which does not directly relate to innovations.

What the term of project was for innovation development can be demonstrated on several examples. The projects Free Arts Record, Úřad práce v Chrudimi (the Labour Office in Chrudim), and Český svaz žen (the Czech Women's Association) were among the first DPs to validate their innovative products.

Table 15: Case study

The CIP EQUAL Round 2 project titled *Celoživotní vzdělávání neslyšících* (Lifelong Learning for Deaf Persons) is aimed to provide lifelong learning for deaf persons and improve their communication with the majority of the community. The project contains a total of 12 activities covering a wide range of the needs of deaf persons. Out of the total 35 developed products, according to MONIT data, there are 24 products that are innovative and have been verified by mainstreaming. According to NSS data, this DP validated nine products as early as 2007, as one of the first validating DPs.

Under Action 1, the DP conducted several questionnaire surveys and used the analysis results in preparations for Actions 2 and 3. This finding makes us believe that project preparation under Action 1 leads to a successful implementation of the planned outputs and products.

Mention should also be made that all activities and outputs of this project are published on a dedicated site in a clear form.

2.5.8 Evaluation Theme 2 Summary and Conclusions – Impact of Term of Project on Innovation Development

As expected, the term of project was important for innovation development. At least three years of stabilisation of the working team (approximately 40 projects run over the maximum term of project) and the organisation's think tank, and enough time to reject ineffective methods and to find out those effective were seen as advisable. DP appreciated that they had been able not only to develop their innovative tools over the term of project, but also test them directly on their target group.

Many DPs appreciated the possibility of having their term of project extended by some time,

³⁴ For more information see the results of the ongoing evaluation of the international cooperation principle, www.forum.esfcr.cz

in which period they did their essential validation and mainstreaming activities. The most frequent reasons for the term of project prolongation were a delay in the scheduled performance and the difficulties of the validation process and mainstreaming activities, but not innovation development. In many cases, however, we can observe efforts to conclude the innovation cycle by introducing the innovations to the market, disseminating, and mainstreaming. Then, the success factor transforms from the term of project into the ability to lobby, network, address the key players, involve target groups, and get feedback.

Action 1, 2 and 3 correspond with innovation cycle process also. However, only in Action 2 the analyses had been mostly conducted instead of being result of first phases of project life. The common call for Action 2 +3 has damaged the causality of innovation development and following verification and dissemination. The DPs utilise largely the maximal time for their projects' implementation. They stressed the importance of innovation testing and target group feedback. Innovation tools development has been influenced by lengths of project realisation time in positive term.

2.5.9 Impact of the MA Supporting Tools and Documents on Innovative Tool Development

Evaluation question 4: Did any supporting tools and documents made available by the managing authority have a positive impact on innovative tool development?

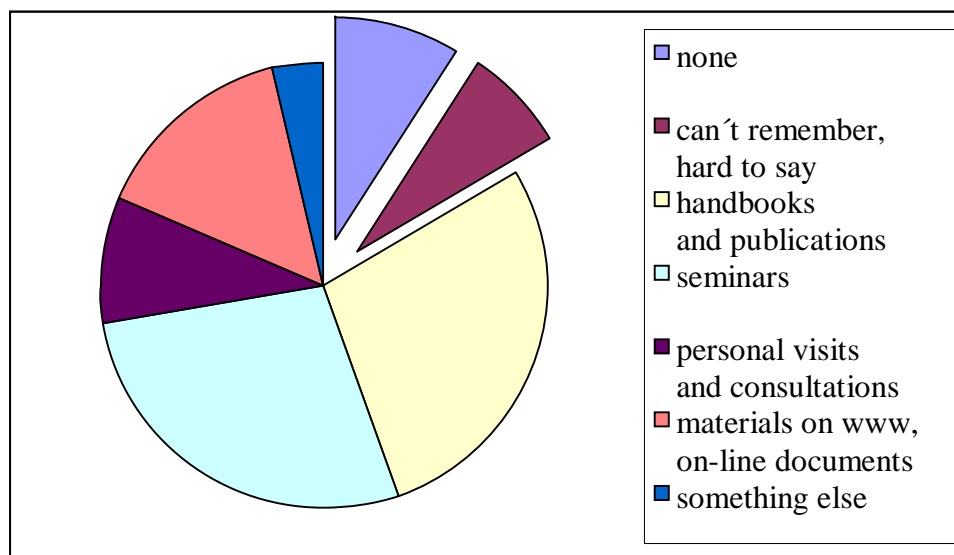
Answering this question depends, in fact, on the information provided by DPS. Therefore, we used both phases of the questioning to obtain feedback from DPs of various NTN. As many as 43% and 57% of respondents acknowledged and failed to acknowledge, respectively, a positive impact when directly asked in questionnaire 1 about the impact of the MA-provided supporting tools and documents.

This result was more specified with a definition of useful aids at a later point. The question was worded in broad terms because we found out earlier that DP representatives were not always able to distinguish between the tasks, activities and assistance by the MA and those by the NSS.

Nearly a half of DP representatives regarded as useful both manuals and publications, and the seminars held by the managing authority and the NSS. The result obtained agrees with the finding obtained in the answers in question 1.02.B. As many as one quarter to one third of DPs were unable to specify any positive example.

The total exceeds 100% because DP representatives were allowed to report more than a single option from those provided. The chart shows the results more clearly, but its data have been re-calculated to the 100% base to reveal the relative weight of each option.

Chart 7: Which tools and documents from the MPSV and the NSS were useful in innovation development?



Source: questionnaire survey

Seminars were also identified by the NSS officers as a positive factor brought about by the MA and supporting innovation development. The officers, however, emphasised the importance of collaboration of DPs within the national thematic networks, the preparation process and the execution of validation, direct intervention by the MA and the NSS, transnational collaboration, involvement of experts in projects, and their own network developed by DPs.

2.5.10 Evaluation Theme 2 Summary and Conclusions – Impact of Supporting Tools on the Part of the MA

Seminars were identified as the positive factor on the part the MA supporting innovation development. All stakeholders also emphasised the importance of collaboration of DPs within the national thematic networks, the preparation process and the execution of validation, direct intervention by the MA and the NSS, transnational collaboration, involvement of experts in projects, and their own network developed by DPs.

2.6 Theme 3: Factors Identified as Obstacles to Innovation Tool Development

Theme 3 in innovativeness principle evaluation is the task to identify and assess the factors which fail to lead to or bar the CIP EQUAL innovation tool development. We have focused on the following, in compliance with the set evaluation questions:

- Identify factors which, if present in project management and implementation, hinder innovative tool development or lead to lower effectiveness of these tools;

- Identify factors in an external project environment which hinder innovative tool development or lead to lower effectiveness of these tools.

The evaluators put a great deal of emphasis on the mapping and assessment of the factors hindering the creation of innovative tools. In the context with mainstreaming evaluation, the DP mainstreaming activities and the impact of involvement of diverse partners, such as employers and businesses, in projects were assessed. It was born in mind that their involvement is very desirable in respect of raising awareness, fighting prejudice, and sustainability of activities. On the other hand, the evaluators warned that even the involvement of the organisations directly working with the target groups or the involvement of the decision-makers is no guarantee of adequate skills in the area targeted by the project or success in respect of innovativeness and mainstreaming.

Lower innovative tool effectiveness is observed especially in a further use of tools in practice. Consequently, it must be distinguished between the circumstances which played a role in innovative tool development and those under which innovations were disseminated and used outside the original project.

2.6.1 Factors Hindering Innovative Tool Development in Project Management and Implementation (Internal Factors)

The second evaluation report summarises the causes of failure of some approaches and methods planned as at the time of application filing and DPA or TCA preparations as follows:

- Insufficient detail on the labour market analysis in relation to the theme and the target groups in question;
- Partnership principle failed to be observed;
- Joint decision-making principle failed to be understood;
- Self-assessment by DPs failed to be applied.

To investigate the possible negative factors by conducting a field research is difficult for similar reasons as those specified above. On the other hand, the direct questioning of DP might be affected by the DPs trying to hide their problems. For this reason, we asked a general question, which nonetheless confirmed the range of causes we had expected. We interpret our question as a projective one, which is a question by answering which respondents reveal the facts about their own situation. Some DPs chose several options, so the total exceeds 100%.

Table 16: What prevented development partnerships from developing more innovative products and processes?

They had a poor situation and need of initial analysis.	48.4%
They prepared an interesting innovation, but someone else was quicker in	32.3%

introducing a similar thing, so the innovation became irrelevant or useless.	
They planned to address a legislation gap, but the missing Act was published, so that some of the activities became devoid of purpose.	35.5%
They failed to gain support from other institutions, such as labour offices, regional authorities, and ministries, necessary for the innovation to be implemented .	61.3%
Other reason	12.9%
They do not know, have insufficient information, or are unable to tell.	38.7%

Source: questionnaire survey

As many as 40% of respondents failed to provide an answer to this question and the other respondents reported insufficient support from other institutions, or other reason.

As a result, the fact that the people in a DP had failed to gain support from other institutions, such as labour offices, regional authorities, and ministries, necessary for the given innovation to be implemented was most frequently reported as a cause of problems in the creation and implementation of innovation. Poor initial analysis was also reported relatively frequently. The statements based on direct questions to DPs reveal much useful information because they are corroborated by the conclusions suggested by the experience of the national support group officers and the managing authority officers, as shown below.

It may be held that these causes were on the part of DPs themselves. Even so, causes attributable to an environment external to DPs are apparent in the answers and interviews to this theme, in accordance with evaluation question 2. These external causes were as follows, according to DPs:

- A lot of funds required; impossibility of flexibility responding to changes; the requirement to have the purpose of money clearly defined as early as the project approval phase³⁵
- NSS and the MA continuously changing the conditions
- Insufficient and unsystematic funding
- Inadequately high administrative load.

We were reported many obstacles to innovation development and use. These were often specified as complaints about too much paper work and too many inspections by the NSS, unjustified default with payment (such as withholding large amounts because of fairly unimportant faults or removable errors), errors made by the MA or partners, lack of experience, or ineffective communication.

³⁵ The rules allowed recipients to do some changes in their projects. It was usually changes in schedules.

The difference from stage 2 of continuous assessment was a significant increase in experience of organisations, which usually managed to remove the internal obstacles to innovation development.

NSS officers define three principal factors limiting innovative tool development: environment familiarity, ability to network, and the recipient's coordination competence and experience. According to the managing authority officers, many development partnerships failed to understand either the innovativeness principle or the mainstreaming principle, to realise what awaited them, and to understand the indicators; moreover, many DPs showed different levels of project management skills, and poor communication was occurring, especially with respect to unclear wording of many documents which used many new English expressions which often transformed into bizarre terminology. When the development partnership finally understood the mainstreaming needs and practices, for instance, it was too late in many cases. The managing authority is aware that the central government itself, reluctant to accept changes, is also a limiting factor, and that DPs have to seek alternative methods or solutions.

2.6.2 External Factors Hindering Innovative Tool Development

The following are the main obstacles and barriers hindering adoption of new forms, already identified and expressed in the continuous evaluation stage 1 final report:

- Poor system adjustment of the labour market, and conflicts between the labour market and the social system, where social benefits are higher than the wages practically available to certain social groups, such as the Romany people or families with children.
- Employer prejudice such as against people with medical disability, graduates, and women with children.
- No possibility of paying different amounts of the unemployment benefit to people in retraining and to other unemployed.
- No system support to the disadvantaged groups is in place.

The projects carried out under CIP EQUAL address these issues with their activities and, according to evaluators, use innovative approaches in their efforts to find solutions. As these are social and system matters, we must wait for the activities related to promoting innovations on the labour market and the results of mainstreaming to see whether these approaches and innovative elements have survived or not (see the chapter Evaluation of Impacts).

The question *What prevented DPs from innovation tool development or compromised the effectiveness of these tools?* was also included in the phase II questioning. Most of the answers included information such as too much information and too many instructions on the part of the MA and NSS, low media coverage at national level of the EQUAL initiative and the care for socially disadvantaged groups.

In respect of these findings, it is particularly important to understand that how people perceive things, rather than the actual state of affairs, is the critical aspect governing people's actions. It is likely that the organisations associated in DPs would welcome less detailed regulation, and more freedom or less strict conditions.

Table 17: What prevented DPs from innovation tool development or compromised the effectiveness of these tools?

	%
Little information and few instructions on the part of MA and NSS	31.6%
Too much information and too many instructions on the part of MA and NSS	57.9%
Low media coverage at national level of the EQUAL initiative and the care for socially disadvantaged people	52.6%
Other reason	15.8%

Source: questionnaire survey

It should be noted the negative feedback by DPs on both excessive and insufficient information provided by the MA and NSS. This is a typical situation where the recipient needs timely, complete, clear, and consistent information, and if such information fails to be provided, the recipient perceives the information flow as insufficient, on one hand, and excessive, on the other hand – because of the inconsistent conditions.

In addition, according to DPs, the NSS focused too much on formal correctness of even minor operations in project implementation, thus causing DPs to spend energy that could otherwise be fully devoted to innovation development and use.

According to NSS representatives, the external factors hindering innovation tool development also include legislation changes, changes in other operational programmes, and changes in target groups. Project key stakeholders may lose interest, in respect of both product development and activities implementation. A project addressing the Romany population, for instance, is only suitable for the given target group, which, however, failed to show any interest in the project activities offered.

As demonstrated in reports from labour offices, innovative tool effectiveness is also compromised by factors such as changes in respect of decreasing numbers of the unemployed in various areas and the fact that the unemployed people registered with labour offices often include very few or no persons of the target group in question.

Table 18: Case study

The Labour Office in Bruntál: *‘The CIP Equal projects are useful and interesting. The reason why the outputs of this project (Centrum vizualizace an interactivity ve vzdělávání Ostrava – the Ostrava Centre of Visualisation and Interactivity in Education and Training) were not applied is the very low number of hearing-impaired job seekers in our records in the long term. For information, eighteen hearing-impaired job seekers with a different degree of disability are currently registered with the Brno-město Labour Office; this number includes no deaf person. The unemployment rate in the Chartered City of Brno is 5.3% as at 31 May 2008.’*

2.6.3 Evaluation Theme 3 Summary and Conclusions

Organisations gained considerable experience over the last project implementation period as they usually managed to remove the internal factors hindering innovation development. The following were hindering innovative tool development or compromising effectiveness of the tools most: the incapability or impossibility of obtaining support from other institutions necessary for the innovation to be introduced; poor situation and need of initial analysis; and inadequate or useless activities.

The factors external to projects hindering innovative tool development or compromising effectiveness of the tools included particularly the following: the MA or NSS continually changing the conditions; too much paper work; too much information and too many instructions from the MA and NSS; insufficient or unsystematic funding and high costs; impossibility of flexibly responding to changes; and insufficient media coverage at national level of the EQUAL initiative and of the care for socially disadvantaged people.

The DP organisations would welcome less detailed regulation, more freedom or less stringent conditions. According to DPs, NSSs focused too much on formal correctness of even minor operations, thus causing DPs to spend energy that could otherwise be fully devoted to innovation development and use.

As demonstrated in reports from labour offices, innovative tool effectiveness is also compromised by factors such as changes in respect of decreasing numbers of the unemployed in various areas and the fact that the unemployed people registered with labour offices often include very few or no persons of the target group in question.

2.7 Evaluation Theme 4: *Innovation quality Assessment*

The difficulty of innovation assessment arises from the subject matter itself. Innovation is a quantitative change by definition, thus every innovation should be different. Statistical measurement, on the other hand, requires that the phenomenon examined show, at a certain level of abstraction at least, similarities in the data observed in different environments and contexts. If not, such a phenomenon is impossible to be compared and aggregated quantitatively.

The difficulty of this task arises out of the very nature of the thing measured. Innovation is a qualitative change by definition, thus every innovation should be different. Statistical measurement, on the other hand, requires that the phenomenon examined show, at a certain level of abstraction at least, similarities in the data observed in different environments and contexts. If not, such a phenomenon is impossible to be compared and aggregated quantitatively. Consequently, a schematised innovation model – a conceptual framework – needs to be set prior to defining innovation efficiency indicators. Simplifying the innovation process, abstracting some of its qualitative nature, will create conditions for its general manifestations to be established.

2.7.1 Innovation Relevance to Discrimination Causes Analysis

According to more than 85% of answers obtained through a web questionnaire, the identified innovation was based on a convincing and thorough discrimination causes

analysis. They were, however, spontaneous answers to a direct question, and it would be technically difficult (accessing the unpublished material of DP by visits in person would be very time consuming, and monitoring reports in electronic form, amounting to more than 1200 in February 2008, are inaccessible) to verify to the fullest extent whether or not such an analysis has been carried out by all DPs and in what quality.

On one hand, organisations would hardly be able to define the objectives of their intentions without an initial situation analysis or without being familiar with environment; on the other hand, it seems that a superficial and rather intuitive assessment of the existing situation on the labour market and CIP EQUAL target groups was sufficient to do the job for the purpose of Actions 1 and 2.

In many cases, project objectives and aims were nothing new to organisations because they (e.g. Gender Studies and Centrum komunitní práce Ústí nad Labem) have been dealing with the same issues for a long time and have been using analyses and documents prepared previously or for a different project. We have found such analyses in some available sources even though not all DPs have made these documents accessible to the public.

In this context it might be advisable to consider what information should be published by DPs. We are of the opinion that it should be information about all products in any stage of development as well as many other documents. Where organisations obtain public funding for projects that are to be applied and even given priority in respect of dissemination on the labour market, and are delivered in the public interest, it is beneficial rather than harmful if another organisation (and even a competitor, perhaps) uses an intention, a product, or an idea thereof to finalise it or verify, introduce to the market, or disseminate. This would actually contribute to the overall purpose of CIP EQUAL and underline the sense of the EU structural funds support. If organisations associated in a DP have decided to apply for public funding support, they should be communicated this in advance and be contractually bound to provide such information.

Table 19: An overview of discrimination causes analyses prepared by DPs

Project 409, Vzdělávací společnost EDOST, the RAP project: A quantitative and a qualitative analysis was made on the sector of employers, and rehabilitation organisations and consultancy organisations, including the screening of persons with medical disability ³⁶

Project 2, DROM, romské středisko, the MIKROBUS project³⁷: A research *Study of Microeconomic Models* was prepared for *Drom, romské středisko* in December 2006–May 2007, for use in the Mikrobus project. The study was prepared by SOCIOKLUB – an association for the promotion of social policy theory and practice. The research was to verify hypotheses on the seriousness of the disproportion of income and expenses in socially excluded households, especially the high frequency and nature of intercommunity loans and indebtedness of the socially excluded, as well as other microeconomic data.

³⁶ <http://www.edost.cz/rap/index.php?page=kvantitativni-a-kvalitativni-analyza-2>

³⁷ <http://rs.drom.cz/cs/tiskova-zprava.php/51-predstaveni-vysledku-studie-v-socialne-vyloucenych-lokalitach.html>

Project 24 With the MOPPS project, Český svaz žen is seeking a way to introduce innovative family services, and the gathering of data on behaviour patterns, attitudes and views of the target groups is based on a series of qualitative surveys, such in-depth interviews, Feedback, DemoProbe, the DEMA survey; their concept provides a detailed picture of various aspects of the field under examination, based on the experience and the real life of the target groups and with a close link to the given project phase.

The **Job Points** project of Obchodní a hospodářská komora (the Chamber of Commerce) is analysing the experience of German and Spanish partners working on vocational training for the target groups. This provides the applicant with international experience.

Table 20: Case study

Project 26: A project of Národní rada osob se zdravotním postižením České republiky (the NRZP) titled *Posílení postavení nezaměstnaných zdravotně postižených občanů na trhu práce na území Prahy*³⁸ (Promoting the position of unemployed persons with medical disability in the Prague local labour market). This project seeks to provide better conditions for persons with medical disability by enhancing their employability on the labour market. The project is one of the few exceptions as to the transparency of the published project activities and outputs.

The principal aim of the project is an equal approach to employment of persons with medical disability. The project's target groups include (i) the persons with medical disability; (ii) existing employers (those with some experience with employing persons with medical disability); and (iii) potential employers (those employers with more than 25 employees which are required by law to employ persons with medical disability but fail to do so for various reasons).

The project analytical stage, spanning nearly a year, produced six analyses, a synthesis thereof, and a seminar for the presentation of outputs. The activities schedule and outputs are in a clear form available on the DP's web site and the coordinator's web site.

The first part contains an extensive analysis of the conditions of employment of people with medical disability in the EU community legislation, and a survey of the corresponding Czech legislation. This analysis also includes a survey into employment of persons with medical disability in Germany. The analysis was prepared by an expert team of partner 3, the research centre for integration of persons with medical disability in Olomouc.

The following analysis monitors the conditions of *Implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for people with medical disability – including an equal opportunities analysis by sex*. Emphasis is put on the monitoring of the legislation in force, and the analysis also contains *de*

³⁸ <http://www.praceprozp.cz/files/editor/File/sbornik-analyz-026.pdf>

lege merenda proposals that might help to remove the critical nodes of social support to employment of people with medical disability, and a detailed overview of statistical data relevant to employment of this group of people – in relation to the application of the equal opportunities principle. The analyses were carried out by the recipient of the grant, the NRZP.

A different analysis by partner 10, *Svaz českých a moravských výrobních družstev* (the Association of Producer Cooperatives in Bohemia and Moravia), presents a final report of an extensive survey among the existing and the potential employers of people with medical disability in Prague. This analysis also contains questionnaires with answers of both respondent groups, and especially the opinions of the analytical team based on a detailed knowledge of employing people with medical disability in the Prague labour market and specialised employers, in particular.

The final section contains two framework reports made by partner 4, *Jedlička v ústav a školy* in Prague, giving an overview of the situation in respect of identifying the existing obstacles for people with medical disability in the Prague labour market, and the possibilities for providing content or institutional background for consulting in this field. A set of analyses presented in this publication aims at not only fulfilling the tasks arising from the analytical part of the project, but especially providing information describing the actual nature and causes of problems encountered, in respect of employing people with medical disability, in Prague and, to some extent such as legislation, in the whole Czech Republic.

After briefly reviewing the analyses carried out, we have come to the conclusion that the documents are of good quality. Highly praiseworthy is the fact that the analyses are published on the organisation's web site in a clear structure, therefore available to both the general and professional public. It is very likely that these analyses will be used not only by the developing partnership but also by other institutions and organisations when the project is over.

Table 21: Case study

Project 53 ORFEUS, Prague.

The Manual for non-government non-profit organisations on an approach to addressing the issues in employing persons at risk of social exclusion is an output of the project *Sociální ekonomika v ČR* (Social Economy in Czech Republic) delivered by the HEFAISTOS developing partnership.

Following a pragmatic and practical approach, the manual is full of advice and tips while containing specific procedures of dealing with clients (including flow charts). For further use, contact facilitation, starting the dialogue, quick navigation of the client and the basic offer, it can use the sample questionnaire, the list of occupations particularly suitable for people with medical disability, or the basic overview of the existing legislation affecting the target groups in question. If clients wish to set up any type of business, in spite of that the current legislation in this field is incomplete, the social worker may use the basic conclusions.

The manual contains the tools and methods effectively working in Spain and Italy, as well as the knowledge generated in other thematic networks and available by the time the manual was being prepared, such as the list of suitable job positions prepared by the NRZP.

‘We have learnt to work with new views on things, we have adopted what we saw as certain in these views, and have learnt how to develop the culture of sharing knowledge in entirely different environments – with different starting points and different approaches’. This is a citation of the authors – experts and project managers – in the preface to the analytical document that allows us to say that anybody who made any contribution to the project or programme activities learnt many things and improved their professional as well as project management skills. And this is a significant outcome of the whole programme that will have a positive impact on the drawing of money from the allocated portion of the structural fund in the following years.

Overview of the innovation evaluation results in respect of the causal analysis of the discrimination type in question

It was established by visits to and detailed questioning in DPs that all of them had analysed the situation at the time and compared it with their objectives in the beginning stage (in Action 1 or 2).

Therefore, we formulated an in-depth question based on a simplified definition of labour market discrimination and asked DP representatives to relate the question to the most significant product or process they had been developing under their DP: ***‘By discrimination, the Equal initiative understands the exclusion of some groups of people from employment, or unequal conditions (labour market inequality) resulting in a worse employment for some groups. Did your development of this particular new product include a causal analysis of the target group discrimination?’***

Detailed surveys in 32 DPs revealed that a complete (thorough) and convincing analysis had not been anything that would go without saying; only approximately half of the DPs reported they had done any such analysis (see the table below).

Table 22: Did you do any causal analysis of target group discrimination?

	Answers	%
Yes, we did a complete analysis with convincing results.	18	56
Yes, we did a partial, incomplete analysis.	7	22
No, we didn't; there was no need to do so because a full-scale analysis had been done already by a different organisation).	2	6
No, we didn't; we started our work intuitively, on the basis of our everyday experience.	5	16

Source: questionnaire survey

The NSS and MA representatives who review the monitoring reports and the products developed by DPs are of the opinion that the analyses show different quality standards and that it is often the case that DPs would call an analysis almost anything. In some instances, analyses are DP outputs or even DP validated products, in other instances they are only background documents to provide a tentative definition of particular activities, content of courses, etc. Many methodology manuals could also be classified under analyses in the broad sense of the word, although showing different quality standards. Usually, analyses and methodologies are outputs of a key activity.

With reference to reviews of several randomly selected self-assessments of DP projects, a certain disappointment as to the evaluator's focus needs to be admitted. The evaluators usually commented on the fulfilling of tasks as planned in schedules, involvement of partners, and area coverage, rather than on the quality, realisation, and dissemination of these analyses.

An analysis of the data in the CIP Equal monitoring system (MONIT) reveals that a relatively large number of analytical or research reports (119) were carried out, which represents an increase by 283% against the plan of 42 analyses. This may be attributable to a vague definition of indicators, products, and product family.

The surveys referred to above lead to the conclusions that

- Most of DPs did an analysis, which was complete and convincing in their opinions.
- Approximately a quarter of DPs did an incomplete analysis or used one carried out by a different organisation.
- The remaining 16% of DPs did no analysis.

As a result, the answer to the question whether or not innovations were based on thorough and convincing discrimination causes analyses is not affirmative.

Our conclusions on poor quality of analysis and frequent duplication of analysis have been supported by findings of NTN experts mapping activities of DPs and NTNs, especially NTN E and NTN F.

The evaluators consider analytical description of project starting position to be essential for projects’ selection procedure. It is highly recommend paying attention to preparation of analysis mapping primary and secondary target groups’ needs and mapping their readiness to implement the innovative products into practice.

2.7.2 Relevance of Identified Innovation to Project Focus

Approximately in 90% of cases, innovations were in a full accordance with the original project from the very beginning whereas in 10% of cases the DP had to adjust the project or the implementation thereof.

Allegedly, nearly in all DPs the innovation matched the project potential for how to address the given discrimination causes. Only exceptionally did DP representatives report that their project had had smaller extent, ambitions, goals, etc.

An answer to this part of the evaluation question based on objective data would require an extensive field research such as to analyse the content of all DP projects and assess their feasibility, i.e. carry out an objective assessment of the internal and external conditions of every single DP project and its environment.

An important source of information is the compendium Products under Development Overview, a CIP EQUAL working document (2007). As stated in previous chapters, this Overview contains descriptions of planned products not yet validated. We selected the first four recipients in every NTN to examine the contributions of their innovative products.

In connection with these randomly selected products we found out that DP usually specified publications, manuals, or web portals, that are something that can be classified as specific project outputs. Not always, however, is this ‘product’ identical to the principal project objective or benefit, such as ‘new tools for persons released from prison with a view to providing better chances for these people to find a job and return to normal life’. Consequently, it was difficult to establish in respect of the products in the overview whether they were either process-, objective-, or context-oriented.

It seems the Czech Republic is currently flooded with new manuals, methodologies, and guides, with the organisations associated in the NTN A alone planning to create 22 such documents. Overall, all NTNs will publish more than 100 publications (this number does not include analyses). The question is how many publications will rest in drawers and how many will actually change anything.

The Managing Authority has not catch up when the developed methodologies make sense. The manuals and methodologies seem to be more tools for innovation transfer then the innovation *per se*.

Table 23: Publications published by NTNs

	Publications
NTS – A	22
NTS – B	15

NTS – C	16
NTS – D	17
NTS – E	19
NTS – F	16
Total	105

Source: Products under Development Overview, MPSV, 2007

Publishing methodologies and manuals is the most frequent product (output) of DPs. Other frequent products include web portals, and courses or training programmes. Only one product is expressly aimed at a change in legislation. It is *Hospicové občanské sdružení Cesta domů*, which specified ‘amendment to the Social Services Act’ as the objective of their product.

Some projects are very original, such as a board game *Cesta z ghetta* (Way out of the Ghetto). ‘...The players become the people living in socially excluded ghettos – they are poor, unemployed, without money, and with bleak life prospects. They are confronted with everyday concerns and problems and the purpose of the game is to get out of the ghetto...’ This unconventional product was developed by *Člověk v tísni* (People in Need) and its partner *SPOLEČNOST TADY A TEĎ* (Community Here and Now) (Project 79).

Digital CV, developed by the Krásná Lípa local authority (Project 48), is another interesting project. ‘...The unemployed person will briefly introduce themselves in the CV, and their work skills are also assessed by an expert or a training leader. A new form whereby the potential employer will provide more information before inviting the applicant for an interview...’

At least three organisations focused on social firms, and a printed document on the establishment and operations of a social firm (Fokus Praha, Nový prostor, and Kazuist) is one the products in respect of all the organisations mentioned.

Approximately one tenth of the products identified as innovative are focused on changes to environment, with nearly one half focused on the process and the product. Two thirds of the most successful innovations are reported to remove labour market discrimination or inequality; it is surprising that the DP chief representatives were unable to assess this aspect in the remaining innovations. Therefore, a substantial minority of DPs were unable to evaluate the key purpose of CIP EQUAL innovations – to remove labour market discrimination or inequality – even towards the completion of their projects.

The examination of the inequality or discrimination to be removed by the relevant innovation sometimes revealed that the supposed removal was only intuitive or based on experience and unsupported by any empirical analysis of the actual situation. To give an example: after an answer ‘discrimination by sex’ the person was unable to specify or demonstrate how the supposed discrimination was shown in practice.

2.7.3 Actual Benefit from Identified Innovation in respect of Addressing Causes of Discrimination

Many instances make us believe that the relevance and effectiveness of some projects is questionable, particularly for a high complexity of tasks assumed by the DP. In other instances, however, organisations did meet the requirement of disseminating a useful ('effective') product.

It would have been a different situation if we had been to deal with usefulness rather than effect of innovation benefits because product usefulness can be documented on many examples and we would have been able to answer the question affirmatively

Table 24: Case Studies

<p>To give an example, the innovativeness of the MOPPS project lies particularly in performing all the project activities (methodology, and implementation of new field services), and intense collaboration in the region has been continuing as part of the global objective (collaboration with organisations such as the Regional Development Department, the Vysočina Region Authority; the NNO Vysočina Coordination Group; <i>Ženy Vysočiny</i> (the Vysočina Women), a newly established working group; and similar organisations).³⁹</p> <p>A project by VOŠ Dakol is another example. This project is innovative in that the school's educational programmes combine formal education with non-formal learning. Each educational programme involves in-class use of therapeutic methods and counselling and motivation programmes. According to the DP, this leads to a more effective learning and a better understanding of the topic taught.</p>
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This would require extensive surveys and assessments of practical impacts of all DP innovations in various environment and institutions across the whole country. The evaluation team recommends to evaluate the question of actual benefit from identified innovation in respect of addressing causes of discrimination in 3 years after finishing Action 3.

2.7.4 Added Value of Proposed Solutions

The proposed solutions usually are, in comparison with the hitherto practice, more suitable to resolve the existing problems. The tens of innovations we evaluated show, however, a high degree of variability, so we list at least twenty typical benefits identified as such by DPs:

- The given solution has not yet been regularly applied in practice by labour offices.
- A comprehensive offer for start-up businesses (text books, courses, business plan, aftercare, and consulting).
- Providing an effective way of working with the target group where other methods failed.

³⁹ Selected interim monitoring reports.

- Gaining technical and practical knowledge and skills of clients and their immediate strengthening in practice. Gaining technical work experience with an employer (mutual).
- The social firm extends potential employment opportunities for disadvantaged people.
- The output manual describes how to work with the target groups.
- An offer of consulting and training services as a complex of services for the target groups.
- The proposed solution provides for a better access of women with children to education so that they would enhance their employability and compensate for their disadvantage.
- The project provides unemployed people with the key and necessary IT knowledge.
- Raising the problem of gender stereotypes and relating it to the labour market.
- Directly addresses the problems of the target group and responds to problems which are described not only in the current situation analyses we have carried out, but also in the analytical documents which are the basis for European programmes dealing with economic issues of the country.
- It is particularly about joining forces of organisations which have been collaborating mildly as yet.
- A change in the method of providing qualification to the population that is discriminated against: 1) qualification to a set of trainers from the target group, and 2) training by the trainers (motivation, the same social background, trouble-free communication).
- Comprehensive approach to supporting and working with the target groups.
- Provides an application model for the training and employing of the Romany community; the model is based on practical experience and the project.
- Ensuring flexibility of the target groups on the labour market and enhancing their labour market competencies. If the services of an Employee Support Centre are provided by the employer for its employees, this adds to employee motivation, the employees are more satisfied, loyal (the existing employees), are better equipped in the case of outplacement, show less hostility to their employer, etc. An Employee Support Centre has many advantages in comparison with labour offices and job agencies.
- The methodologies developed in Action 2 show a strong practical focus, providing their users with practical guides for new procedures or standardising the existing procedures in planning local and regional networks with a view to providing better access to services for socially disadvantaged people. To achieve this, they use the method of community planning, extend it from the standard sectors to the labour market, and try to get employers involved as the important creators of regional networks of jobs and employment opportunities for people disadvantaged on the labour market.

Analysis in relation to NTN

Based on the content analysis of benefits identified by DPs grouped following their NTN involvement we went to interesting findings. Namely, there is no interdependence. The identified benefits do not depend on project thematic focus.

The DP identify the new proposed solutions in the areas that do not consist with thematic areas, such as

- Aimed at unemployed people
- Complexity in approach
- Inventive steps
- IT utilisation

Development partnerships used different tools to evaluate their innovations. Usually, they did so by practical comparison of their own procedure results and those of other similar organisations, as shown in the table (the respondents were allowed to specify several tools, so the total exceeds 100%):

Table25: Which tools did you apply in evaluating your innovations?

	Answers	%
Comparison of own procedures and results and those of other similar organisations	18	56
A group of project representatives evaluate each other's outputs	11	34
Own evaluation method for good practice and innovations (with the national thematic network)	8	25
Other tools (feedback from users, verification in practice)	2	6

Source: *questionnaire survey*

In this connection we were also interested in which method DPs applied in identifying good practices. We found out that most DPs (75%) used evaluation questionnaires for target group members, and comparison with practices of similar organisations (38%). Among other methods used by DPs in identifying good practices were monitoring, pilot testing, interviews, email feedback, direct communication with target group, dialogue with similar Czech or international organisations, and external validation.

The partners involved in CIP EQUAL projects were communicated through consulting services by the MA and NSS how they could determine and increase the 'added value' of their innovations. It seems that this communication contained useful ideas, which were utilised by DPs to a large extent.

Let us give two examples – one unaccomplished and one accomplished attempt to apply a high added value:

1. One of the largest and well researched analytical products is the nationwide survey among local providers and customers of social economy services, carried out in 2006 under the Hefaistos project.

Most of the respondents had sufficient knowledge of what social economy means. They understand it as a component of doing business under advantaged conditions, as a public policy tool of the EU member countries, and as the reflexion of Christian moral values. According to a vast majority (80%) of the interested public, social economy is, in terms of the society as a whole, about providing opportunities for socially disadvantaged people so that they could earn at least some of their living and would not be entirely dependent on the community, rather than about the number of jobs and production growth.

Although the survey revealed the attitudes of the interested public to the given topic (including opinions as to what action should be taken for the sake of further social economy development), the organisation which had ordered the survey failed to systematically apply the survey results and conclusions, so that these could not effect any changes in the existing practices and any legislation changes to support social economy, and perhaps they could not be reflected in the creation of the given area of support in the operational programme Human Resources and Employment.

2. The project *Rozvoj sociální firmy* (Social Firm Development) is delivered by Fokus Praha (a civic association for mentally ill people, www.fokus-praha.cz) and Sananim (a civic association for drug addiction prevention and treatment, www.sananim.cz) as part of CIP EQUAL. The purpose of the project is to present and implement a model of a social firm in the Czech Republic, with the project output being the publication *Sociální firma – výzva v podnikání 21. století* (The Social Firm – A Challenge for Doing Business in the 21st Century).

This publication contains the definition and standards of the social firm, as well as case studies of the social firms set up during the project and testing the social firm standards, examples from other countries, and a comparative table defining the social firm in contrast to the sheltered workshop, the regular firm, and the socially responsible firm.

Summary:

The proposed solutions developed in projects are, in most cases, demonstrably more suitable to resolve the existing problems than is the existing practices. To evaluate their innovations, DPs used various tools, usually comparison of own procedures and results with those of other similar organisations.

Most DPs use evaluation questionnaires for target group members to identify good practices. Also, DPs received information and advice from the MA and NSS on how to identify and increase the 'added value' of their innovations.

2.7.5 Feasibility and Sustainability of Proposed Solutions

As shown above, the sustainability problem should not be reduced to the continuance of funding of the follow-up activities of the organisation which had developed the innovation. Sustainability must be treated in a broader scope and at two levels:

- At the level of the specific organisation – the creator of the innovation – it is suitable to distinguish between financial sustainability, institutional sustainability (the required organisational, human, material, information, and other resources), and political sustainability (legislation changes facilitating or hindering the continuance of activities);
- At national level, as a problem of disseminating, adopting and using innovations both horizontally and vertically; making them to be introduced to the practices of public administration authorities at any level of hierarchy as well as other providers of similar services on the labour market.

The system sustainability, for instance, of a range of validated innovations depends on the ability and willingness of an organisation to spread their own products (i.e. to be used even by potential competitors), the willingness and readiness of stakeholders in public policies to absorb and use the innovation and adapt it as the basis for a regular tool of employment policy in the area in which they operate.

Specific methods of ensuring the sustainable use of products were part of project mainstreaming strategies while sustainable product (project) funding is one of the vertical mainstreaming objectives.⁴⁰

A suitable source of funding will be the critical factor in the case of financial sustainability, and such a source is available for the period of 2007–2013 – it is the operational programmes *Lidské zdroje a zaměstnanost, Praha – adaptabilita*, and other programmes to some extent.

However, already the final report for CIP EQUAL stage 2 evaluation acknowledged sustainability problems of most projects in respect of obtaining finance outside public budgets when public funding support had expired. The ‘mini networks’ formed under development partnerships during the term of project are instable where the DP do not pursue a shared objective.⁴¹

A strategic disadvantage of the course of action taken by many DPs is that they continue to rely on generous amounts from the ESF and national sources, and have failed to draw up the necessary scenarios for collaboration with the private commercial sector even though there are many tools which they can use to reduce, at least, their full dependence on public money, i.e. the central government, and which would be worth being initiated and tried (such as the idea of CSR and sponsorship, non-profit activities of banks and churches, or public fund-raising campaigns)⁴².

This is indirectly demonstrated in the questionnaire answers obtained in 32 DPs:

How do DPs ensure the continuance of innovations after the term of project is over? Usually, they prepare similar projects, especially under the LZZ OP, establish good relations with the public administration or other parties in their environment, and take care to spread their

⁴⁰ Minutes of second NTN coordination meeting of 5 March 2008

⁴¹ Second Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, Final report, 2006

⁴² We do not claim that these concepts are not employed in the Czech republic, but rather that we observed no express efforts in the DPs in CIP EQUAL and especially Action 3 to obtain private co-funding for follow-up activities.

innovations horizontally (the answers to all options are summarised in a single table, so the total exceeds 100%).

Table 26: How do you ensure the continuance of innovation when the term of project is over?

	Answers	%
Prepare, on their own or jointly with partners, a follow-up project to be funded from the ESF	26	84
Establish such relations with parties in their environment, especially public administration (community or regional authorities, labour offices), that would secure them support in future	18	58
Ensure that other organisations use their innovation	15	48
Other	2	6

Source: questionnaire survey

Under **Other** is classified the system change consisting in setting up the Centre of Excellence for Key Competencies and in the negotiations to include the methodology of soft skills description and development in the system projects and programmes such as those like the National Occupations Framework or the National Qualifications Framework.

What according to DPs will be the principal barriers for innovations to continue in the next period? Above all, it is the shortage of money for the use of the innovation, as expected, and, to a lesser degree, insufficient materials, equipment and space for the continuance of activities, as well as missing or ineffective collaboration by the service providers necessary to implement the innovation.

Table 27: What are the principal barriers for innovations to continue in the next period?

	Answers	%
Funds too low to use the innovation	23	77
Insufficient materials, equipment and space to continue the innovative activities	9	30
Missing or ineffective collaboration by the service providers necessary to implement the innovation	9	30
Shortage of people who would realise the innovation (innovated service or other product)	5	17
The inadequate qualification of people required for future realisation of the innovation	1	3
Lack of information or manuals on how to use the innovation	1	3

Source: questionnaire survey

We obtained interesting results in respect of sustainability when asking DPs a hypothetical question how they would spend one million Czech crowns if it unexpectedly arrived on their table. This situation is of course a fiction, but bears a very important piece of information about the organisation's potential priorities as to activities financing.

The question was: 'If you unexpectedly obtained one million Czech crowns for your organisation (not for the whole DP), for what purposes would you use it?' The organisation representatives answered each question separately, so each line shows a total of 100%.

Table 28: How would you spend any additional money?

	Most this	on Major portion on this	Little or nothing on this
(a) wages for existing staff	12	63	25
(b) other operating costs, such as premises lease, equipment, telephone charges	9	43	48
(c) training for own employees or members (including internships and study trips)	31	58	11
(d) expand existing activities (services) such as to cover additional regions or customer groups	58	27	15
(e) develop, confirm and introduce new services or services for new target groups	42	29	29
(f) other	25	25	50

Source: questionnaire survey

How else would the organisation spend one million Czech crowns?

- We would repay our loan, and our debts incurred as a result of unsystematic, unprofessional, disorganised, and eventually detrimental activity of the MPSV and the PwC.
- For mainstreaming and gender mainstreaming.
- To disseminate and promote our project products, and to support the development of a network or collaborating organisation on the labour market.

The list clearly shows that on the condition of enough funds the money would be preferentially spent such as to expand current activities (services) to other regions or to other customers, and to a lesser degree, to develop, verify and implement new services or service for new target groups. Wages and costs of education and training are also among the frequently given answers.

Summary:

Most often, DPs ensure the continuance of innovations after the term of project is over by

preparing similar projects, especially under the LZZ OP, establish good relations with the public administration, and take care to spread their innovations horizontally.

According to DPs' estimates the principal barriers for innovations to continue in next period will be, above all, the shortage of money for the use of innovations, and to a lesser degree, insufficient materials, equipment and space for the continuance of activities, as well as missing or ineffective collaboration by the providers of relevant services.

Consequently, the sustainability problem should not only reduce to ensuring enough funds for the continuance of activities of the organisation which has developed the given innovation. At the level of the specific organisation – the creator of the innovation – what is also at stake is the institutional sustainability (the required organisational, human, material, information, and other resources), and the political sustainability (legislation changes facilitating or hindering the continuance of activities); at national level, it is the ability and willingness of other service providers on the labour market or public administration authorities to disseminate, adopt and apply innovations both horizontally and vertically.

The operational programmes *Human Resources and Employment* and *Prague – Adaptability* as well as other programmes are among the suitable sources to finance follow-up activities.

A strategic disadvantage of the course of action taken by many DPs is that they continue to rely on generous amounts from the ESF and national sources, and have failed to draw up the necessary scenarios for collaboration with the private commercial sector.

If funds were ample, priority would be given to expanding current activities (services) to other regions or other customers, and to a lesser extent, to developing, verifying and implementing new services or service for new target groups and covering the payroll and education and training costs.

2.7.6 Putting proposed Solutions into Regular Practice

The following practices may be applied in order to ensure sustainability:⁴³

- Interaction between all the parties involved – communication, and exchange of information and experience project implementers and the target groups.
- Approach innovativeness as a process of several levels – pursue 'your own' level (local or regional) as well as the national and transnational level.
- Ensure feedback on each of the project activities.
- Collaborate with institutions operating at national/transnational level.

Seventy-three development partnerships⁴⁴ were involved in CIP EQUAL Actions 2 and 3, and each partnership associated an average of nine (or even more) organisations or entities. This means that the intent of CIP EQUAL – 'to support, across the whole EU, transnational cooperation in developing and enforcing new tools for fighting any form of discrimination and inequality on the labour market' (www.equalcr.cz) – is evenly disseminated across the

⁴³ MPSV ČR, *Inovativnost v programu EQUAL*, 2004

⁴⁴ 73 DPs, including projects under additional programme calls

whole Czech Republic. The main impact is only performed by mainstreaming the outputs and results of each project. We already have examples of organisations spreading, or making preparations to spread, the solutions proposed. Examples⁴⁵:

Table 29: Case studies

The DP representatives in the MOPPS project will lobby legislators for legislation amendments in connection with the innovated social field services, such as day mother or all-day care centre.

The RAP project by the educational company EDOST has published a draft structure of mainstreaming strategy at <http://www.edost.cz/rap/index.php?page=narodni-tematicka-sit>.

The MIKROBUS project by the DROM Romany community centre provides information about the project *Personální poradci pro asistované zaměstnávání* (Assisted Employment Counsellors) at <http://rs.drom.cz/cs/tiskove-zpravy.php/2007>. Supervised by the Drom community centre, work on 'assisted employment' was started under the Mikrobus project in January 2006. Approximately 500 job applicants from three regions in the Czech Republic have used the services provided by the centre as at today. In November 2006, a new partner, the civic association *Společnost Romů na Moravě* (the Society of Romany Community in Moravia), joined the project, expanding it to another four localities (Frýdek-Místek, for instance).

In the *Job Points* project by the Chamber of Commerce, the innovative methodologies of consulting and training programmes (specifically prepared for the target group's disadvantages on the labour market) are offered for general use in the APZ and the MŠMT and for educational and training facilities.

The inspiring concept of innovation of CIP EQUAL and development partnerships in the United Kingdom shows that innovation must be understood not as a one-off project, but as something that should run over a long term and for which adequate conditions must be created. This is of particular importance in the rapidly changing society and in the context of the labour market and employment. The following are regarded in the United Kingdom as important things in respect of innovativeness sustainability:⁴⁶

- The need to create a culture and an environment supporting innovativeness sustainability.
- Ensure that the outputs, i.e. what will be created, will also be passed to others, therefore be transferrable. Moreover, intellectual property protection issues need to be clarified.
- The transnational dimension offers ample potential for innovations while posing challenges and providing transferability.
- The partners who inform of innovations and disseminate information act as champions (originators of ideas) and sponsors, which means putting the activity into practice.

⁴⁵ Selected sites of development partnerships and selected interim monitoring reports

⁴⁶ Second Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, Final report, 2006.

Tools and practices, such as the validation procedure and mainstreaming strategy, have been developed for further use, spreading and application of innovations. We observed many things at DP level, however, which compromised or hindered the effectiveness of these tools and practices. These things included the following:

- Validation procedure was not followed through – Although it was completed formally, there was no follow-up action in respect of the validation results or the validation process generated no comments or recommendations (a question of approach, of the standard demanded by validation experts and the implementer's attitude towards additional improvements, and innovation dissemination and application);
- Insufficient distinction between dissemination and mainstreaming;
- No pressure on policy-making organisations, such as municipal and regional authorities, the parliament, and the MPSV, in order to enforce the innovation as a standard tool on the labour market or in the relevant legislation.

Originators of innovations used the national thematic networks to mainstream although the regional mainstreaming structures (which, however, had not been set up or offered as were the NTN⁴⁷) would be more appropriate for dealing with many regional issues.

In many cases, we encountered something that might be described as indecision or reluctance of public administration authorities or even service providers to adopt an innovation 'too extensive', too new or unusual. Preference is given to certainty and established practices, which gives rise to a certain inertia in the application of procedures and products, a reduced space for an innovation to develop and be applied to the fullest (e.g. reluctance of a district labour office to publish and expand a project although the project's credibility has not been questioned).

Some innovations failed to be properly followed through up to mainstreaming. For example, the document *Hodnocení mainstreamingové strategie - Průřezová skupina NTS - Integrace osob ze sociálně vyloučených lokalit* of December 2007 (Mainstreaming Strategy Evaluation – The Cross NTN Group – Integration of People in Socially Excluded Localities) makes no mention of the proposed strategy in the chapters *Mainstreamingová strategie* (Mainstreaming Strategy) and *Klíčové prvky strategie – výstupy a jejich využití* (Key Strategy Elements – Outputs and Use Thereof). Instead, the material summarises activities of the NTN members, of which one – People in Need – seems to have sought to implement the project outputs in local policy.

Table 30: Case study

⁴⁷ In many cases it appeared as if DP organisations did not care to enforce their own innovations and were satisfied with using them themselves (perhaps, they had been creating innovations solely for their own use). They used NTN⁴⁷ because they were encouraged to do so and these NTN⁴⁷ had already been 'provided' while no network had been provided for them for the use of their innovations in regions. As a result, innovation dissemination in regions was often insufficient. There were, of course, some cases to the contrary, where regional dissemination and application were effectively in place (projects such as education and training projects of the labour offices in Semily and Most, and secondary technical school in Most-Velebudice).

The *Polis* project by People in Need aimed to prevent formation of unprivileged areas and help set communal social policy to save most people experiencing a life crisis from social exclusion and help them return to regular life. This required establishing permanent links between the relevant institutions and increasing the public awareness of what life in social exclusion is like.

The section *Klíčové inovativní výstupy* (Key Innovative Outputs) (products, proposals for legislation changes, projects developed in the given NTN) states that ‘the presented projects and documentary material and the discussions suggest several important innovative solutions’. None of them are specified, however, and further text only discusses issues such as project ethnical sensitivity. Admittedly, the Agency against Social Exclusion was being set up with the Office of the Government along with the activity of this NTN, but this is only indirectly rather than directly attributable to the outcomes of the EQUAL initiative in the Czech Republic.

A concept of key importance in mainstreaming is real change in procedures (strategies, policies or practice) of relevant entities⁴⁸. Therefore, it must be concluded that the contribution of the ‘cross’ NTN to the implementation of innovations in legislation or in the practices in society was probably negligible in this case, and, apart from some exceptions, failed to fulfil the purpose of mainstreaming either at national level or the DP level, and either horizontally or vertically.

This could have been contributed to also by the managing authority, which in August 2004 published a leaflet defining mainstreaming in rather broad terms. ‘Activities identification’ is based on answers to the following fundamental questions: What will be mainstreamed? At what entities will the activities be directed? How will the target groups be addressed? When will the best timing be for the activities? It may be the case that the development partnerships interpreted these questions as the sufficient features of mainstreaming (in fact, they only express the ultimate use of project outputs).

Coming back to evaluation question 1.04.F, it may be observed that other partners in a DP are interested in adopting new solutions, i.e. an innovation designed by another partner. One third of DPs answered ‘yes’ and added they did so; more than a half of DPs reported that such adoption seemed to be, or would be, happening.

As for entities outside DPs, the situation is less favourable, as might be expected: it is the case in a quarter of DPs that their solutions are adopted by entities outside the DP, and such adoption is sought, or likely to be sought, in less than a half of cases.

What did DPs do then to encourage other entities (either within or outside the DP in question) to adopt their solutions? Nearly in all the cases identified, the original organisation documented the hitherto verification and its results, and prepared a methodology of further dissemination and use. Also, most organisations drafted a procedure on how to apply the new solution. Overall results are shown in the table below (with a total of 100% on each line).

⁴⁸ Mainstreaming may be briefly defined as identification, formulation and integration of the products, processes and experience newly generated under CIP EQUAL into practice and employment strategies at local, regional and national level (see, for example, T. Tyrrell at the seminar Innovation and Mainstreaming in September 2006 in Prague).

Table 31: What did DPs do for new solutions to be adopted by other organisations?

	Yes	%	No	%
a) The author of the solution documented the verification process made so far and the results thereof, and drew up a methodology.	24	96	1	4
b) The DP analysed the conditions for the innovations to be transferred and adopted by another.	8	57	6	43
c) The DP made a draft plan on how to apply the new solution.	17	85	3	15
d) Other support	7	78	2	22

Source: questionnaire survey

Other support to other organisations adopting activities developed by a DP, as specified by the DPs:

- Communication between the DPs in the Czech Republic
- More promotion to an innovation
- Sharing innovations by holding round tables, workshops and seminars under a follow-up project
- Seminars and training.

Table 32: Case study

In terms of a specific example of Fokus Praha, these include a whole mainstreaming strategy translated into practice – seminars, a conference on the social firm, discussions with people with a potential interest in setting up a social firm, visits to existing social firms, dissemination of the brochures *Sociální firma – výzva v podnikání 21.století* (The Social Firm – A Challenge for Doing Business in the 21st Century) and *Standardy sociální firmy* (The Standards of the Social Firm), the site www.socialnifirmy.cz, and similar activities.

Summary:

It may be confirmed that the solutions designed in DPs have been disseminated or such dissemination is under preparation by organisations either within or outside DPs. Innovations themselves, however, must be understood not as a one-off project, but as something that should run over a long term, and their dissemination must be paid attention to even after a project is over. Tools and practices, such as the validation procedure and the whole mainstreaming strategy, have been developed for further use, spreading and application of innovations. On the other hand, the following were particularly among the things which compromised or hindered the effectiveness of these tools and practices at DP level:

- Validation procedure was not followed through – although it was completed formally, there was no follow-up action in respect of the validation results, or the validation process generated no comments or recommendations (a question of approach, of the standard demanded by validation experts and the implementer's attitude towards additional improvements, and innovation dissemination and application);
- Insufficient distinction between dissemination and mainstreaming;
- No pressure on policy-making organisations, such as municipal and regional authorities, the parliament, and the MPSV, in order to enforce the innovation as a standard tool on the labour market or in the relevant legislation.

DPs almost always documented, for the sake of disseminating new solutions, the hitherto verification process and the results thereof, and prepared methodologies for further dissemination and use. Most organisations also drew up a draft plan how to apply the new solution.

Originators of innovations used the national thematic networks to mainstream, even in the cases where it was regional issues that were to be addressed and, therefore, where regional mainstreaming structures would be more appropriate (but the DP did not try to set up any such regional structures).

There was also indecision or reluctance to adopt an innovation 'too extensive', i.e. too new or too unusual, shown by not only public administration authorities but also service providers.

2.8 Overview of Public Programme Interventions relevant in respect of innovation or Potential Impact of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic

In the first part of this chapter the following areas are discussed: assessment of the relevance of the CIP EQUAL thematic priorities in respect of the National Employment Action Plan; the ties of CIP EQUAL to the Employment Act (Act no. 435/2004 Sb.); targeted programmes at regional level; and the SROP and OP RLZ structural funds for 2004–2006.

In the last chapter of the evaluation report to the innovativeness principle titled 'The projection of the innovativeness principle in selected operational programmes for the period 2007–2013', we focused on the innovativeness principle in the operational programmes *Praha adaptabilita*, *Lidské zdroje a zaměstnanost*, *Vzdělávání pro konkurenceschopnost*, *Podnikání a inovace*, and *Regionální operační programy*. In view of the strongly applied principle of innovation support, in both technical and non-technical senses, in the Leader priority, we also touched on *Program rozvoje venkova*. The emphasis on innovations, however, is a requirement following from the Community General Strategic Guidelines and other programme documents of the EU and the Czech Republic, rather than a consequence of CIP EQUAL mainstreaming.

2.8.1 Overview of public programme interventions relevant in respect of the impact or potential impact of CIP EQUAL

Relevance in respect of the National Employment Action Plan for 2004–2006

According to our findings in the evaluation of the National Employment Action Plan, priorities 1, 4, 6, and 7 are relevant to CIP EQUAL.

PRIORITY 1 – ACTIVE AND PREVENTIVE ACTION FOR UNEMPLOYED AND INACTIVE PERSONS

Participating in the social inclusion strategy declared by the Lisbon meeting in March 2000, the Czech Republic prepares the Social Inclusion National Action Plan for 2004–2006 (NAPSI). The MPSV, which is in charge of these preparations, set up for this purpose a working board comprised of representatives of ministries, government agencies, regional and local authorities, social partners, non-profit organisations, and independent experts.

- Facilitate participation in employment and access to all sources, rights, goods, and services;
- Provide against social exclusion risks;
- Help those who are the most vulnerable;
- Mobilise all relevant authorities.

The NAZP 2004–2006 priorities are followed up by the respective priorities and measures of the programme documents forming the basis for the use of the European Social Fund (ESF) in the Czech Republic. These are the *Rozvoj lidských zdrojů* operational programme (RLZ OP), *Jednotný programový dokument pro Cíl 3 regionu NUTS 2 hl. m. Praha* (the Unified Programme Document for Objective 3 for a NUTS 2 Region of the Capital City of Prague, hereinafter as the JPD 3), and CIP EQUAL.

The NAPZ priority 1 is supported from the ESF under the RLZ OP Measure 1.1. ‘Posílení aktivní politiky zaměstnanosti při zaměstnávání uchazečů a zájemců o zaměstnání’ (Promoting active employment policy in employing applicants and job seekers) and the JPD 3 Measure 1.1. ‘Rozšíření a zvýšení adresnosti aktivní politiky zaměstnanosti’ (Extended and better targeted active employment policy). The programme documents measures that supplement the active employment policy within the government authority with a range of activities and a focus of these activities on broader groups of people.

PRIORITY 4 – SUPPORTING HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFELONG EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Member states will implement the lifelong education strategy, which includes things such as enhancing the quality and effectiveness of educational systems and practical training systems, with a view to equipping all people with the skills required from modern manpower in a knowledge based society, allowing for their careers to develop, and reducing the imbalance and the number of bottlenecks in respect of skills on the labour market.

In compliance with the national priorities, the policies will seek, above all, to accomplish the following outputs by 2010:

- At least 85% of the 22-year-olds in the EU have completed upper secondary education;
- At least an average of 12.5% of the adult productive population (aged between 25 and 64) in the EU take part in lifelong education.

Education and especially vocational training for life in a knowledge based society is one of the government's goals. The government passed a ***Strategy of Human Resources Development for the Czech Republic*** by resolution 210 of 3 March 2003. The Strategy contains five interrelated objectives based on the priority needs of the Czech economy and society:

- Establish lifelong learning as a regular practice;
- Prepare people for the challenges of the information and knowledge based society, global economy, the necessity of sustainable development, and the accession to the EU;
- Enhance the competitiveness of the economy of the Czech Republic and make it more attractive to investors;
- Increase employment by enhancing employability;
- Improve the use of limited resources and the mobilisation of means for human resources development.

In the RLZ OP as well as the JPD 3, the entire Priority 3 ***Rozvoj celoživotního učení*** (Lifelong Learning Development) and its three measures are devoted to lifelong education: Measure 3.1 ***Zkvalitňování vzdělávání ve školách a školských zařízeních a rozvoj podpůrných systémů pro vzdělávání*** (Improving schooling and developing education and training support systems), Measure 3.2 ***Podpora terciálního vzdělávání, výzkumu a vývoje*** (Supporting Higher Education, Research and Development), and Measure 3.3 ***Rozvoj dalšího profesního vzdělávání*** (Developing Further Occupational Education and Training). This last measure is aimed at developing the offer of further occupational education and training in a systemic manner and introducing key systemic mechanisms to this area. Implementation of these measures will help to establish a system of recognised qualifications that would interconnect the sphere of education and the sphere of employers, motivate employers and other social partners to get involved in the process of defining instructional content, teaching methods, and certification requirements.

In CIP EQUAL, these topics are treated under theme 5 ***Podpora celoživotního učení a postupů umožňujících zaměstnání osob ze znevýhodněných a diskriminovaných skupin na trhu práce*** (Supporting lifelong learning and the practices providing for the employment of people disadvantaged or discriminated against on the labour market).

PRIORITY 6 – EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

Equality of women and men

The member states will support the participation of women on the labour market in an integrated manner combining gender mainstreaming and specific activities and significantly reduce, by 2010, the differences between women and men as to the employment rate, unemployment rate, and wages and salaries. The role of social partners is a key factor in this respect. With a view to eliminating the differences, policies will especially seek to have significantly reduced the differences in the wages and salaries paid to women and men in every member state by 2010, employing a multilateral approach to address the basic factors in the different remuneration between women and men, including segregation in respect of industry or occupation, education and practical training, classification of job positions and remuneration systems, and enhancing transparency and awareness of these issues. Particular attention will be paid to balancing career and family, especially by providing care for children or other dependants, supporting the sharing of family and job duties, and facilitating a return to work after absence. Member states should remove the factors demotivating women to work, and seek work, while allowing for the demand of day care facilities and following their national models of children's care, to secure day care for at least 90% of children between three years of age and the age of starting compulsory school education, and 33% of children under three years of age by 2010.

This priority is in accordance with CIP EQUAL Theme 8 *Snižování rozdílů v uplatňování žen a mužů na trhu práce* (Reducing Differences in Engagement of Women and Men on the labour market).

PRIORITY 7 – SUPPORTING INTEGRATION OF THE PEOPLE DISADVANTAGED On the labour market AND FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

In compliance with resolution 547 of the government of the Czech Republic of 4 June 2003, the government's statement of priorities, and its 2004 legislation tasks plan, a draft bill providing for the rehabilitation of persons with medical disability was prepared under collaboration of the MPSV, the MZd (Ministry of Healthcare), the MSMT, the Government Committee for People with Medical Disability, and the Czech Republic National Council of People with Medical Disability. This draft bill addresses some of the fundamental issues, in particular the right of people with a medical disability to be provided a comprehensive system of rehabilitation to the necessary and meaningful extent, as well as the cooperation and integration of the respective rehabilitation care areas. The draft bill provides for a legislative basis of such rehabilitation services, thus creating conditions for a comprehensive rehabilitation system to be ensured. The objectives of government policy in respect of people with medical disability policy are defined in Mid-term Government Policy in respect of People with Medical Disability approved of by resolution 605 of 16 June 2004.

The target group of the Integration of Aliens in the Czech Republic Strategy is the aliens who have legally stayed in the Czech Republic for one year or over. The Strategy is to ensure these aliens the same rights as those enjoyed by Czech citizens or the EU countries citizens, especially in respect of access to the labour market or running a business, social security, and healthcare.

This priority of the National Employment Action Plan is supported from the ESF in respect of all programme documents – it is Measure 2.1 *Integrace specifických skupin obyvatelstva ohrožených sociálním vyloučením* (Integration of Specific Population Groups at risk of Social

Exclusion) in both the RLZ OP and the JPD 3. In terms of employment, this measure will focus on long-term unemployment, which is determined especially by diminished capacity to work, low education or training attainment, and advanced age. The population under acute threat are people with a combination of several disadvantaging factors. In CIP EQUAL social integration and discrimination prevention are reflected in several themes such as Theme 1 *Improvement of access and return to the labour market for persons with integration difficulties*, Theme 2 *Fighting racism and xenophobia on the labour market*, Theme 3 *Improving conditions and tools to develop self-employment of the disadvantaged population*, and Theme 5 *Supporting lifelong learning and the practices providing for the employment of people disadvantaged or discriminated against on the labour market*.

CIP EQUAL and the Employment Act (Act no. 435/2004 Sb.)

Part V Active employment policy

Active employment policy is a set of measures aiming to ensure a maximum possible employment rate. The policy is implemented by the Ministry of Labour and labour offices, plus other organisations as may be required by the situation on the labour market.

The tools to translate active employment policy into practice include the following:

- retraining
- investment incentives
- community service
- special vacancies referred to as socially dedicated jobs (společensky účelná pracovní místa)
- bridging allowance (překlenovací příspěvek)
- transport of employees allowance
- job position familiarisation allowance (příspěvek na zapracování)
- allowance in transition to a different business scheme.

Active employment policy measures also include counselling by labour offices to ascertain people's personal and occupational skills and abilities with respect to career choices, arranging suitable employment, selecting pre-employment training of people with medical disability, and in selecting suitable active employment policy tools.

Active employment policy is funded from the state budget, and there is a special statute to regulate the use of the money spent on active employment policy. This money may also be spent on the verification of new active employment policy tools and measures or on regional or national programmes or measures as well as projects of foreign entities helping improve the employment rate.

Other 'Targeted' Programmes to Address Employment

- Employment issues of the community, district, regional, or national level can be addressed with targeted programmes, including international programmes with

international participants, programmes funded from the European Community Structural Funds, and other EC programmes.

- **Targeted programmes** are understood as sets of measures aimed at enhancing the chances of individuals or groups thereof to get employment; such programmes also include defined terms and conditions for their execution, and funding schedules. National targeted programmes are subject to approval by the government of the Czech Republic while community, district, and regional targeted programmes require approval by a ministry.

With reference to the above description, it is obvious that CIP EQUAL is of a complementary nature in connection to Active Employment Policy, thus providing a direct support to the tools employed in this programme.

Consequently, CIP EQUAL is not different from other programmes in this field in terms of focus, but rather in its specific nature and employment of each of the principles typical of CIP EQUAL. The specific features of CIP EQUAL consists in developing and testing social inequalities removing inequalities and discrimination on the labour market.

Comparison of Measure 3.2 in the Joint Regional Operational Programme and with that in CIP EQUAL

The requirement of innovativeness was not an express principle adopted under the SROP strategy whereas the principle of partnership became one of the core requirements on potential projects, especially those under Axis 3. Here, this principle was expressed as a commitment 'to use partnerships of local initiatives and authorities and to resolve problems of usually small disadvantaged population groups'. The criteria for project application assessment included: 'How is the partnership principle respected in your project preparations and delivery?'

Measure 3.2 had the following objectives:

- Reduce social isolation of population groups at risk of social exclusion.
- Reintegrate disadvantaged population into community life and employment.
- Prevent crime and social pathology.
- Mitigate social disadvantage of population in less developed regions.

These were prevailingly objectives identical to those set out under the EQUAL initiative – moreover, the extent of SROP was larger because it also covered additional aspects of social integration of the disadvantaged population, rather than just their employment. As a consequence of this focus, there were non-government non-profit organisations which drew money from both sources (EQUAL and SROP) to fund similar activities. Expectedly, the specific outputs of their projects were different ...

No innovativeness requirement was included in this measure (as it is not included, for instance, in the current operational programme *Praha – Adaptabilita*). As the necessary SROP ex-post evaluation studies have not yet been ready, there is no complete overview available of the outputs delivered. It may be expected, however, that the innovation rate will be relatively low.

Table 33: Case Study

The project *Skok do života* (Jump into Life), with a budget of CZK 2,467,140 and delivered by the civic association *Společnost pro podporu lidí s mentálním postižením v Hradci Králové* (Society for Support of Mentally Disabled People in Hradec Králové), stands on four pillars: Competence, Employment, Learning, and Guidance. Step 1 consisted in opening a work rehabilitation training workshop, a principal tool of acquiring work skills and habits in a real environment. To be able to use their work competencies acquired at the training workshop, clients could use a service of assisted employment to get assistance in seeking a job and completing on-site training. Lifelong learning ensures that clients will maintain their knowledge and skills acquired at school, while the follow-up guidance service contributes to that the services provided under the project are transparent and clear to understand.

The main goals of the project was to improve social integration, increase employability, and provide better access of mentally disabled people to employment. The project outputs show no differences in quality or innovativeness degree from those of development partnership projects under CIP EQUAL. Moreover, and similar to DPs, the activities of the said applicant failed to continue in line with the original project after the project was over.

CIP EQUAL principles in the operational programme Human Resources and Employment

The CIP EQUAL principles were followed in delivering both CIP EQUAL and the selected projects under the RLZ OP and the JPD 3 (the principles of gender mainstreaming, and partnership). On the basis of the experience with delivering CIP EQUAL, the EU member states together with the European Commission decided to allow, in the new programme period of 2007–2013, for the principles typical of this initiative in all programmes funded from ESFs. Consequently, the priority axes of the Human Resources and Employment operational programme also focus on supporting these principles – specifically, it is support to applying the principles of partnership, international cooperation, and innovativeness. The principle of joint decision-making will be partially applied together with the partnership principle.

The evaluation studies available show that the pursuance of the innovativeness principle in the CIP EQUAL supported projects was supported by the principles of partnership and international cooperation to a large extent. In the shortened programme period of 2004–2006, the CIP EQUAL national mainstreaming strategy left a large amount of responsibility for the pursuance of the mainstreaming principle with the aid recipients. Experience with the implementation of CIP EQUAL shows, however, that these recipients concentrated on dissemination activities rather than mainstreaming their outputs, experience and knowledge.

For this reason, one of the supported activities of the Human Resources and Employment operational programme is the formation of networks involving the key institutions and

partners dealing with human resources development in the Czech Republic, and projects with such a focus that may be delivered will, as such, have a great potential to facilitate human resource development mainstreaming.

The principles of innovativeness and mainstreaming need to be supported methodologically, given the low awareness of these principles. In our opinion, these principles, however, guarantee no better product quality or better benefits of innovative solutions.

2.8.2 Translation of Innovativeness Principle into Selected Operational Programmes for 2007–2013

The innovativeness principle is reflected in all operational programmes (OPs) in various forms. Each OP has its own goals and innovation-related monitoring indicators.

***Praha – adaptabilita* OP (PA OP)**

Quality management in respect of administering local government in the City of Prague appears to be a critical innovation in the planned local government modernisation. Another means to achieve better administration efficiency is the development of collaboration with universities and other relevant institutions. Particularly the principle of advancement-oriented innovation is pursued in this.

Other innovation principles (those oriented on process, target and context) are apparent in international cooperation. In the PA OP, international cooperation is understood as closely tied to innovations, and innovative activities will be supported across the PA OP priority axes. Given the dynamic development of occupational adult education in the area of the City of Prague, support to innovative activities will be essential in the implementation of priority axis 1. Along with that, the emphasis on innovation and transfer of new practices will also be employed in integrating the disadvantage population and modernising initial education, that is, as part of priority axes 2 and 3.

More detailed innovation descriptions are provided under the respective priority axes. **Priority axis 1 – Podpora rozvoje znalostní ekonomiky** (Supporting Development of Knowledge-based Economy) will pay attention to the development and use of the Prague innovation potential through improving collaboration between research and development facilities, education and training facilities, and the commercial sector, such as by know-how transfers and internships. Among the supported activities are preparation and innovation of further education methodologies and tools, including training and occupational training of further education providers. This innovation principle is a process-oriented innovation one.

Priority axis 3 – Modernizace počátečního vzdělávání (Modernising Initial Education) supports activities of Improving Secondary School and Tertiary Technical School Education (**Zkvalitňování vzdělávání na SŠ a VOŠ**) – development and innovation of secondary school and tertiary technical school educational programmes in relation to labour market requirements and with respect to the flexibility and adaptability of their graduates on the labour market (e.g. development of the key and transferrable competencies, and development of distance and combined learning courses).

Human Resources and Employment OP (LZZ OP)

The LZZ OP also focuses on (process, objective, and context) innovation in various fields. It is apparent that the Czech Republic needs to pay more attention to designing methods to disseminate innovative and modern forms of work organisation, including identification and provision of services as to ensuring better approach to employing the unemployed persons and those at risk of unemployment.

The LZZ OP also makes reference to continuous assessment of the CIP EQUAL, which shows that international cooperation contributes to the introduction of innovative approaches, spreading of good experience, and better policies addressing particularly the labour market. International cooperation reveals that such innovations include all the three types: process-, objective-, and context-oriented innovation.

On the basis of the experience with delivering CIP EQUAL, the EU member states together with the European Commission decided to allow, in the new programme period of 2007–2013, for the principles typical of this initiative in all programmes funded from ESFs. In the case of the LZZ OP, the priority axis thus also focus on support to these principles – specifically, it is support to the pursuance of the principle of partnership, international cooperation, and innovativeness.

Experience with managing and delivering projects focused on the EQUAL Community Initiative principles

The evaluation studies available show that the pursuance of the innovativeness principle in the CIP EQUAL supported projects was supported by the principles of partnership and international cooperation to a large extent.

In the shortened programme period of 2004–2006, the CIP EQUAL national mainstreaming strategy left a large amount of responsibility for the pursuance of the mainstreaming principle with the aid recipients. Experience with the implementation of CIP EQUAL shows, however, that these recipients concentrated on dissemination activities rather than mainstreaming their outputs, experience and knowledge. For this reason, one of the supported activities of the LZZ PO is the formation of networks involving the key institutions and partners dealing with human resources development in the Czech Republic, and any delivered projects with such a focus will, as such, have a great potential to facilitate human resourced development mainstreaming. Experience has shown that for mainstreaming to be successful it is necessary to get the competent partners involved in the relevant networks, ensure support by the managing authority to vertical mainstreaming (translation into specific policies), and, as far as innovation mainstreaming is concerned, introduce a validation methodology with a view to verifying innovation quality and get key stakeholders involved in innovation development. The principles of innovativeness and mainstreaming need to be supported methodology-wise, give the low awareness of these principles.

On one hand, evaluation studies show that international cooperation is an important factor of successful development and enforcement of innovations; on the other hand, methodology

support to organisations involved in international cooperation is necessary in order to ensure a highly efficient international cooperation.

Innovativeness in priority axes:

Priority axis 1 – Adaptability focuses on process-oriented innovativeness (creating new – innovative – educational programmes for employees and particular groups, developing and innovating educational programmes for economically active population, and similar activities). Priority axes 2 to 5 will also focus on support and application of innovative approaches and activities.

Vzdělávání pro konkurenceschopnost (Education and Training for Competitiveness) operational programme (VK OP)

This programme will support initial education activities focused on quality improvements in education and training (detailing and providing comprehensive methodology support for the creation of educational programmes, innovations thereof with a special emphasis on the development of students' key competencies, etc.). These are process-oriented and objective-oriented innovations.

A typical process-oriented innovation is the focus of priority axis 1 – *Počáteční vzdělávání* (Initial Education). Besides other methods, this priority axis will be put into practice through detailing and providing comprehensive methodology support for the creation and delivery of educational programmes and innovation thereof, with the necessary emphasis especially on developing key competencies in students.

The VK PO supports the development of a further education system and strategy, including support to innovative approaches and bringing together research and development, and the world of practice (process-oriented innovations).

All three approaches are reflected in the measures under the VK OP priority axes (especially axis 2 – *Terciární vzdělávání, výzkum a vývoj* [Tertiary Education and Training, Research, and Development]):

- 2.1 Tertiary technical education
- 2.2 Higher education
- 3.2 Support to providing further education
- 4.2 System framework of tertiary education and human resources development in research and development.

NUTS II Northeast Regional Operational Programme

We chose the ROP for NUTS II Northeast as an example of ROP. For the period 2007–2013, the document sets out process-, objective-, and context-oriented innovations, particularly in the following areas of support:

Area of Support 2.2: Urban development

Global objective:

- Enhance economic and social development in cities

Operational objectives:

- Regenerate and revitalise urban environment
- Develop infrastructure in education, healthcare, and social care.

Support is targeted also at other investments into reconstructions, modernisations, equipment for primary schools (including those for children with specific needs) as well as secondary and tertiary schools, which is a pre-condition for the introduction of new educational programmes or alternative forms of providing education.

Area of Support 4.2: Support to development of collaboration of business with secondary schools and secondary vocational schools, other regional educational institutions, and labour offices, and development of innovation activities in the region

Global objective:

- Improve collaboration between regional stakeholders in the sphere of creating favourable conditions for school leavers to be successful on the labour market, and create favourable environment for the development of innovation activities.

Operational objectives:

- Improve physical conditions for teaching graduates practical skills and for the acquisition thereof by graduates
- Increase the involvement of public administration and other key stakeholders in innovation activities in their regions.

Country development programme (CDP)

Although not an operational programme, the CDP supplements the family of operational programmes with support to businesses in the agricultural or non-agricultural sectors, communities with a population under 500, and local action groups operating on the basis of local intersectorial partnerships.

Assessments of the situation in the country up to now state that competitiveness growth is, among other things, limited by a slow transfer of knowledge and innovations (especially in relation to the environment-related legislation and the use of information technologies).

To remedy the situation, the innovation-oriented priority axes have been chosen, and there are planned process-, objective-, and context-oriented innovations across the whole CDP. Innovations are expressly discussed in Priority 1.1 Modernisation, Innovation and Quality (as part of axis 1), and the Leader priority.

The Leader method contributes to the development of micro regions in the country in a unique and remarkable way. In the Czech Republic, where the old thinking oriented on the past method of central administration with determined reduction of local and individual initiative has still been surviving in many areas, this new method is a major innovative feature that provides local communities with sufficient room for active involvement of all entities in the development of their micro regions, including the responsibility for the outcomes of this activity to be transferred to local level.

The purpose of employing innovative elements is to provide conditions for further development and change existing practices in dealing with those local problems on which the existing practices fail to be effective. Innovation lies in using local potential anew. (Innovation does not imply that the existing effective practices should be abandoned.) Innovation or innovative practices mean the following, for example:

- Introduction to the market of new products or services that reflect the specifics of the given area;
- Innovative methods of management and involvement of local community in the decision-making process and project implementation;
- Introduction of new methods in using local potential;
- New events or activities held or carried out in the area for the first time.

Innovations continue to be evaluated using selected monitoring criteria. The goal for the period 2007–2013 is ‘to improve competitiveness of agriculture and forestry’ (to ensure competitiveness, the priorities should focus, as defined in Strategic Instructions, on the transfer of knowledge and innovations in food chain, and investments into physical and human capital). These are process-oriented innovations. The new programme combines continuity with innovation in order to satisfy national needs as well as the need of the EU and international commitments.

Enhancing economy competitiveness in all OPs

In the Czech Republic, enhancement of economy competitiveness is based on two documents: the National Innovation Policy and the Economic Growth Strategy. The former sets out four basic goals as follows: *promote research and development as a source of innovations; establish a working collaboration between the public and private sectors; ensure human resources for innovations; and make the central government performance in research, development and innovations more efficient*. Research, development and innovations are one of the five pillars of the Economic growth Strategy. Its purpose is to get the Czech Republic substantially closer to the economically more developed EU countries while following the principle of sustainable development.

Pillar 5 of the Strategy is devoted to research, development and innovations, and sets out the following goals: promote research and development as a source of innovations; establish a working collaboration in research, development and innovations between the public and the private sectors; ensure human resources for research, development and innovations; and

make the central government performance in research, development and innovations more efficient.

In the Strategy, innovations are linked with two major activities and these are the activation of the research and development sphere, and the commercial sector innovation activities by which innovations are put into practice through making products and rendering services.

Supporting protection of intellectual rights is also among the innovation priorities included in the Entrepreneurship and Innovations Operational Programme for 2007–2013, and is detailed in the INNOVATIONS programme. In the current programme period, this programme concentrates on supporting technology and non-technology innovations, that is, innovations of products or processes and organisational or marketing innovations. Besides this, activities have also been extended to simulation of patent activity of small and medium enterprises. The funds expected to be allocated to the programme Innovations for the whole programme period amount to CZK 14.1 billion.

The programme INNOVATIONS was in place as early as 2004–2006, and is considered to be one of the most successful programmes with the demand substantially higher than the offer. Especially product and process innovations, and non-technology innovations to a less extent, have been supported under the INNOVATIONS programme. Protection of intellectual property has not yet received any support.

Summary:

The principle of support to both technical and non-technical innovations is employed in the reviewed operational programmes and the Country Development Programme. Innovations are subject to monitoring indicators and selection criteria. The whole family of OPs have a 'pro-innovative' orientation.

However, the emphasis on innovations is not a result of mainstreaming CIP EQUAL, but rather a requirement arising out of the Community Strategic Guidelines and other EU programming documents for a new period.

2.9 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

Many DPs and their members were confronted with a relatively new situation when they had joined CIP EQUAL: organisations had been already providing caring, employee, educational, or consulting services for various groups of socially disadvantaged population and wanted to continue in their activities. The possibility of obtaining money through CIP EQUAL was a welcome opportunity for them. Consequently, many people in NNOs or other institutions started 'doing innovations' because the programme required so. They started improving their existing practices, services and products. They started communicating more

because they had to set up and develop development partnerships. Thus, it was involvement in CIP EQUAL that started changing the practices, patterns and activities of many tens of organisations. CIP EQUAL requirements (especially the partnership principle) made organisations break out of their isolation, shake off potential competition between each other and start interconnecting their activities, thus achieving more synergy. The things relevant for the assessment of benefits are, eventually, the mid-term impact of CIP EQUAL on the labour market, employment and employability in the Czech Republic.

Also, the aspects we have described have a direct impact on the application of the innovativeness principle. On one hand, organisations are, quite rightly, led to develop innovative tools⁴⁹. On the other hand, there is an increasing tendency to present any novelty as an innovation and interpret it as an added value and thus an innovation (cf. Products under Development Overview, 2007). This was broadening the concept of innovation while devaluing the original meaning of a breakthrough change in existing practices on the labour market.

We had to go through hundreds of pages of documents while evaluating CIP EQUAL. No matter whether the documents were from the managing authority, NSS partners, DPs or NTN, their style was always very heavy and obviously very difficult to understand. Complex sentences with no predicate running over several lines, or ample use of foreign words which did not fit the context of the sentence. This results in the misunderstanding of the basic concepts and principles which are to be followed.⁵⁰

In the concept of innovations focused on process, objectives and context, it is understandable that process-oriented innovations prevail. As many as 77 CIP EQUAL products were put to validation procedures between September 2007 and 30 June 2008, of which 68 products were validated successfully. As the process is brand new in the Czech Republic, the approach to validations taken by DPs must be qualified as responsible. Table 1 lists the products validated as yet.

It is beyond doubt that the manual Product Validation Methodology (June 2007) has helped to unify validation procedures while maintaining the required validation standard. As many products have not yet been put into validation procedures, which would assess their innovativeness, the final conclusions on the extent and range of innovations are not yet available.

Partnership is a good environment to generate and develop innovations. Such a partnership, though, must be based on open and creative collaboration, rather than formal confirmation of required elements, such as agreements, minutes, etc.

⁴⁹ The necessary requirement of innovativeness may sometimes pose a high risk that organisations would abandon some of the established and well-working practices and try to add something new 'at any cost', which may not necessarily bring any new and desirable value. (Reading through some tens of planned innovation products of DPs, it is perfectly sufficient to get this impression.)

⁵⁰ This was also confirmed by DP representatives with whom we were in touch over the phone or in person. They do not understand even the key concepts of CIP EQUAL. Many questions (regular questions asked to identify source documents; not evaluation questions) were complicated and abstract even when the potential recipients from CIP EQUAL are hundreds of non-profit organisations, community authorities, labour offices, and small business, that is, organisations or individuals that do not need or use the vocabulary of structural fund support. In addition, some documents are mediocre translations from a foreign language

CIP EQUAL is very demanding for all the parties involved as well as the general public, the more so because of the CIP EQUAL terminology. It has been apparent since the programme started to be prepared that many specialised terms and expressions have no established counterparts in the Czech language, so the English terms began to be used and declined (cf. policy makerů and mainstreamingové aktivity) by managing structures officers as well as individuals involved in delivering DP projects.

In the year 2008, the last year of CIP EQUAL implementation and finalising DP projects, we have been observing increased activity by both the MA and DPs in the sphere of product use, that is, transmission of innovations to application at national level. We have been observing a great deal of interest and effort by managing authority officers in respect of support for the mainstreaming activities of DPs as well as NTN. Relatively positive feedback is apparent in the MA's reports of June 2008. According to these reports, key institutions were addressed and their feedback on the use of products was obtained, new contacts with political stakeholders were established, a detailed discussion on products was started, and the MPSV, including the SSZ, expressed their support.

Recommendations

The application of the most innovative products and practices may be hindered by habitual tendencies or resistance of the implementers of regular, well-mastered, less demanding or less common activities in practice. It is likely that this resistance is more frequent in public administration than in the non-profit or commercial sectors, which are generally more flexible, more willing to take risks, and more capable of action. It is therefore recommended for far-reaching innovations (fundamental changes) to be phased in two steps: network to win over the relevant stakeholders to the change, and only then go on to implement it.

We recommend to Managing authorities of ESF operational programmes to differentiate in between normal calls and the calls targeted innovation support. Those should be accompanied by instruction and enlighten activities both for implementation structure staff members and for beneficiaries and applicants.

We recommend to set up clear innovation criteria in project selection procedure and to train projects' evaluators. Special measures should be taken in order to avoid duplication of projects' similar themes. Quality and authenticity of starting point analysis in projects application should be emphasised.

We recommend to the managing authorities of ESF OP to pay attention to projects phases, the phases outcomes and quality of analysis realised. To build on experiences from programme CIP EQUAL Action 1, 2 and 3. To adopt organisational innovation checklist.

We recommend to the MA of CIP EQUAL conducting evaluation of innovation products some 3 years after Action 3 has finished.

We recommend in respect of the validity period of the new OPs that emphasis should be placed on using plain language that is clear to understand and uniform interpretation of terms. The rules and requirements of managing authorities and mediating entities should be tested on a target group relevant for the potential recipients.

For new recipients the managing authority should arrange a training seminar or workshop focused on project management, understanding and uniforming the terminology relevant for the operational programmes funded from the ESFs.

We recommend to increase transparency and dissemination potential by publishing data on the ESF-supported projects, and to ensure particularly the following:

- proactively publish information to which no specifically defined statutory grounds for non-disclosure apply; such publication may include posting on a public administration web portal;
- publish any documents, studies, projects, project applications, rejected projects information, information about the circumstances allowed for by authorities in allocating funds, and any other similar material, and only omit such information, if any, from these documents the disclosure which is contrary to the positive law.
- publish outputs of DP project on the Internet, such as analyses, educational programmes, and methodology material.

3 Implementation and operation of CIP EQUAL

Evaluation tasks focusing on the analysis of CIP EQUAL implementation and operation are usually descriptive of the selected areas, with the exception of specialised case studies concerning problematic areas that required analysis of the situation or the context of identified problems. The descriptive nature of those tasks results from the contract documents for this evaluation project.

3.1 Evaluation questions and answers

- Task 2.01: What major problems and obstacles appeared in the course of Action 2 and 3 in terms of the MA, NSS and DP activity?

In the opinion of the evaluator of the third phase of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL, problems arising from the unclear and unspecific definition of activities and the overall, originally envisaged role of the NSS, as well as the insufficient understanding of the experimental nature of CIP EQUAL have manifested themselves more markedly during Action 2 and 3. The role of a similar NSS in the programming period of 2007 – 2013 should not be just administrative; rather, it should be more proactive and initiatory in expert matters. Expert assistance to the MA can be increased by external experts' more active involvement in the implementation structures of similar programmes. To improve relations between the MA level and the NSS in the programming period of 2007 – 2013, it will be necessary to formulate more precisely the contract between the programme MA and entities fulfilling the role of a support structure (including the MA's ability to affect the NSS entity during the

programme implementation for instance by mandatory methodical guidelines) in similar ESF funded programmes. Administration at the project level was viewed as rather problematic. It is therefore essential to simplify the administration of projects and the submission of various basic documents for technical and financial monitoring reports in similar programmes. This is possible by mapping the necessary prerequisites for the administrative capacity of potential applicants prior to announcing the individual calls, and by drawing their attention to these aspects still in the course of project application preparation.

- Task 2.02: Does the administration system, procedure and personnel capacity setup correspond to the requirement for optimum implementation progress?

If the MA is to provide some activities through outsourced TA in the programming period of 2007 – 2013, criteria that will conform to the programme's implementation environment and eliminate as much negative experience with CIP EQUAL as possible will have to be set up within the bidding procedure accurately and as clearly as possible. In the programming period of 2007 – 2013, the MA should specify analyses of personnel needs in their management manuals, which should be performed at six-month intervals at minimum and in the scope as specified in Chapter 5.3 of the CIP EQUAL Management Manual. Furthermore, the MA should perform continual analysis, review and systematic sorting of methodologies, interpretations, guides, and guidelines in terms of their material content as well as up-to-datedness to ensure their compliance with the currently applicable legislation. More intensive involvement of private entities (i.e. including non-profit organisations) in the implementation of ESF-funded programmes seems to be a promising option for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure, provided that there are well adjusted and defined contractual provisions. Specific risks connected with the private sector involvement to implementation structure of programmes financed by ESF is possible to effectively sorted out by running instructions to intermediate body (National Support Structure) – into more details see the answer of 2.03 task

- Task 2.03: To what extent are the NSS activities in the CR relevant and efficient in comparison with other EU Member States? What innovative activities have been implemented by NSS in the CR and what necessary activities have not yet been implemented by NSS in the CR?

Defined NSS activities in the CR are relevant to set of conditions of CIP EQUAL in the CR. The implementation environment in Slovakia is relatively similar to environment in the Czech Republic, even though the NSS in Slovakia is institution of public administration. Partial imperfections concerning the involvement of experts and delegates of policy makers in the CR was sorted out in Slovakia via coordination by expert group of professionals and politicians. In perspective of the character, the system in the United Kingdom were more close to the NSS in the CR, because in the role of NSS were a subject of private sector, although, which had a longterm experience in cooperation with a public sector. Comparison with the operation of NSSs in the United Kingdom and Slovakia showed that it would be advisable to have an MA with clearly defined competences and possibilities that would be able to affect the organisational structure in the NSS. In this respect, the MA should consider whether it wishes to intensify its guidance with regard to the NSS activities in the form of methodical guidelines (this could be also integrated in the contract) or whether to only rely on a specific scope of tasks defined in a contract with a private entity, which can never cover the overall complexity or the experience gained within the own execution of the programme. In this sense, the

combination of fulfilling methodical guidelines within the framework of a contract may be a good solution.

3.2 Conditions and progress of Actions 2 and 3 to date

These issues are divided into three levels of CIP EQUAL implementation, namely MA, NSS and DP. The research with structured interviews focused mainly on problematic areas at the level of the NSS and MA. The DP level was investigated using a web questionnaire as well as structured interviews. As *CIP EQUAL entered its main implementation phase in early 2008, with most projects getting into the stage of putting validated innovative products into practice and relevant policies*,⁵¹ it was necessary to focus the research not only on the assessment of the procedural matters of Actions 2 and 3 but also on the fulfilment of the CIP EQUAL concept with respect to its experimental nature. Thus, the survey using the web questionnaire and structured interviews focused on the extent of problems in selected areas, assessment of the progress of their resolution in comparison with the state described in previous evaluation reports and the examination of options for further solutions.

3.2.1 Context of progress and development at the DP level to date

The contract documents for this evaluation project specify the obligation to create, within this part, case studies of solutions to identified problems and obstacles in the implementation of Actions 2 and 3 with various DPs. Problematic areas of Action 2 and 3 identified during the questionnaire survey in early 2008 were further reviewed during in-depth structured interviews in May 2008 and the mainstreaming expert panel in June 2008. The issues are discussed in the colour boxes below the analytical assessment of each problematic area.

Administrative and implementation operation of CIP EQUAL

Within the results of the questionnaire survey, the results of the assessment of the administrative and implementation operation of CIP EQUAL are rather good now according to grades from DP evaluation. This is also interesting in respect of the fact that the previous evaluation reports mentioned a number of problems in connection with the course of Action 2 and 3. However, a little more detailed view offers verbal answers that the respondents could add to this question. Those reaffirmed the findings from previous evaluations, namely that the beginning of Action 2 and 3 in the second half of 2005 and in 2006 was dismal for the individual DPs and they would grade a number of the implementation aspects with a 5. An opposite trend occurred between 2006 and 2007, when the MA and NSS performed a number of activities that facilitated the implementation of Action 2 and 3 significantly. Generally, DP representatives only have good opinion of NSS activities under the guidance of PWC during the last year, 2007. Right after PWC assumed the role of the NSS, not all problems were resolved promptly, plus there were problems with a high employee turnover in the NSS. NSS employees focused mainly on the administrative and procedural aspect of the CIP EQUAL implementation, which is appreciated by DPs in the light of unresolved problems in administration by the National Training Fund, which played the role of the NSS before PWC.

⁵¹ cit.: MoLSA (2007d), p. 1

Case study of handling the problematic area

Generally, the in-depth structured interviews did not show that the DPs should be adversely affected by partial discrepancies in the set administrative and implementation operation or communication between the MA and the NSS in any way. The physical aspect of the implementation of the projects was largely unaffected by those issues. On the contrary, it was confirmed that in the DP representatives' view, PWC in the role of the NSS fulfilled its challenging task in the administration of CIP EQUAL very well and behave correctly in communication with the DP representatives. There was just one complicated issue, which concerned the interpretation of the monitoring indicators the definitions of which the MA had modified according to recommendations made by the evaluator of the 2nd phase of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL to make them comprehensible and relevant.

Employee turnover is relatively common not only in public administration but also in the private sector. In this respect, it is advisable to keep thorough records of all questions and tackled problems under the agenda of each project at the level of the "liaison body" (NSS) for ESF funded programmes in 2007 – 2013. This could resolve the issue of a high employee turnover, with each newly hired employee going through the project implementation "history", including administrative problems that have already been resolved, before initiating communication with applicants. Such records would significantly facilitate the overall administration of projects and technically solve the said employee turnover. In addition, there would be no more requests, for instance, for documents that DP representatives have already sent in several times. A disadvantage of this procedure is a possible increase in programme administration costs at the level of the NSS. This risk can be eliminated by an agreement on activities and their financing. Generally, the increased costs can be considered well spent, since there would be a drop in the costs of administration at the project level.

Administrative demands of project implementation

In terms of the overall project administration, it is moreover very difficult for the DPs to keep providing the large amounts of copied documents for accounts or for the provision of technical and financial project monitoring reports. In this respect, it is advisable to significantly expand the use of quality software and provide source documents for the above-mentioned interim reports in electronic form (except for project accounts) in the programming period of 2007 – 2013.

As there will also be changes in the course of the implementation of the individual ESF funded programmes during the new programming period, it is necessary to follow certain rules for the implementation of such changes. This especially concerns informing about prepared changes in a timely manner and giving the applicants a chance and support to prepare for the changes.

Some DP representatives confirmed in the structured interviews that personnel and financial matters in the project design had sometimes been underestimated during the preparation of their project for CIP EQUAL, which resulted in heavy demands on the administrative and implementation agenda of the project. Those DPs that were based on long-term preparation of chosen topics to be implemented under the project (i.e. even before the start of CIP

EQUAL) were at an advantage to be relatively successful in Action 2 and 3. Those strong DPs took full advantage of their situation in Action 3 calls, in which they were able to expand project activities and increase their funds. However, it should be added that those strong partnerships relied mostly on partners from the private sector – usually corporations such as joint-stock companies or limited companies.

Case study of handling the problematic area

Administrative demands of project implementation are not viewed very positively by all DPs in general. Even though most DP representatives have got used to the set administration system under CIP EQUAL and the documentation of expenditure has even been partially streamlined, it is still possible to draw a partial conclusion that relates to the original underestimation of the overall administrative demands of projects funded from CIP EQUAL. The result is partial overload of DP employees with the administrative agenda of the project.

On the other hand, it should be said that the implemented administration streamlining, such as the above-mentioned streamlined documentation, did not result, paradoxically, in the planned simplification at the DP level. For the simple reason that DP employees had to pay more attention to the individual documents that were provided and copied. A partial solution for the new programming period is to provide a wider range of selected source documents for monitoring reports just in electronic form (scan) with the possibility of a subsequent on-the-spot check.

In terms of the administrative demands of compiled monitoring reports, however, financial monitoring reports were not significantly criticised. There were much more serious problems with the compilation of technical monitoring reports and the not entirely sufficient comprehensibility of indicators monitored at the programme level. The monitoring indicators (see also the chapter discussing the mainstreaming monitoring tools) were adjusted during the CIP EQUAL implementation to better correspond to the context of the implementation of this programme, with stress put especially on comprehensibility.

Problematic areas in partnerships and their relation to the course of Action 2 and 3 and DP financing

Although the partnership principle has relatively positive ratings in the CIP EQUAL implementation, certain partnerships still mentioned one specific problem affecting the smooth course of Action 2 and 3 and their own operation. This concerned situations where e.g. the unreliability of a project partner or other involved externs caused problems in the implementation of project activities as such (e.g. the unreliability of a graphic designer or externs). The unreliability was made even worse by the late start of project activities in 2005 (slow start of projects) because of a shift in the entire disbursement schedule. The problem with the partnerships consisted mainly in the fact that the MF and OPC investigated the setup of those issues, so grant decisions could not be issued. In addition, the EQUAL NO terminated its activities without finishing the administration of all reports. At that time, the MA took emergency measures and steps to handle the situation (inter-departmental discussions, hiring externs for the MA and completion of administration of all reports from Action 1). In some DPs, the partners therefore refused to participate in project activities any

longer, especially due to their weak financial background – e.g. non-profit organisations. Problems with financial management resulted mainly from failure to meet deadlines for the approval process for monitoring reports, which took up to several months in some cases. A relatively paradoxical situation arose in the programme administration, with strictly enforced deadlines for DPs on the one hand but without any time limit for the NSS or MA on the other hand.

For these reasons, DPs had trouble with insufficient free funds to cover even common operating costs (such as wages or service deliveries).⁵² DP representatives' initial focus on just the administrative rather than physical aspect of project implementation was thus a fundamental negative predisposition for a delay in the implementation of activities, which even resulted in the inability to make full use of the originally planned funds in some cases.

The preparation of technical and financial monitoring reports is rather complicated, especially for DPs with a large number of partners. Generally, there were problems with the late delivery of source documents from the leader partner and the resulting delay in the submitting of appropriate reports. Moreover, some partners (e.g. universities) had accounting systems that were not ready for project administration under such a demanding programme at all. In the upshot, however, the situation in the individual DPs stabilised and after the improvement in the NSS's approach, the administrative aspect of the project stopped being so extremely complicated.

Case study of handling the problematic area

Universities, in particular, had trouble with the EQUAL project accounting system; project administration was very complicated and difficult for their systems. In some cases, partners fulfilled their proposed activities and became inactive in the project after that. It was also very difficult for the leaders of the DPs to keep their focus and energy throughout the project and support them in further activities. However, this is no failure; on the contrary, it was an assumption for all projects funded by CIP EQUAL that the final beneficiary would be able to ensure the activities over a longer period of time.

The various methods of communication implemented by the partners, when some of them have e.g. a very controlled and formal style of communication while others are more flexible, can be seen as added value of the partnership within CIP EQUAL funded projects. It is the organisation of such DPs involving various entities that would probably never cooperate in their activities in many cases that is one of the positive results of this programme. Therefore, the problematic areas within partnerships in the course of Action 2 and 3 can be seen as an automatic precondition for the CIP EQUAL implementation rather than a considerable complication.

A recommendation that can be made for the new generation of programmes for 2007 – 2013 is that the MA of each operational programme should take much greater account of the types of potential applicant entities in their calls, in particular of the specifics of non-profit organisations. The advance and continuous financing system is a matter of life or death for this type of entity.

⁵² See also Khazal, W. (2008), p. 19

3.2.2 Context of progress at the NSS level to date

NSS's role in the implementation of CIP EQUAL

PWC, which only assumed the NSS role for Action 2 and 3, did not have much chance to affect the setting of conditions at the beginning of the CIP EQUAL implementation. The reviewed evaluation reports, web questionnaire and structured interviews have shown that the situation with the administrative management of the programme and the projects was not good when PWC entered the implementation of CIP EQUAL. A number of existential problems related to the overall programme administration persisted in some DPs, concerning mainly late payments on payment applications, the legal status of a “partnership” was unclear, the Ministry of Finance dealt with VAT in DPs, etc. DP representatives rated that period very negatively, with fierce criticism aimed not only at NVF but also at the MA. PWC's beginnings in the NSS role are not rated very positively by DP representatives due to an approximately half-year introductory period during which PWC employees were still learning to work actively. That's why PWC employees' approach was very conservative and only dealt with the most important administrative issues of the DPs. However, after the half-year “introductory period”, the situation improved dramatically for the DPs as the above-mentioned problems were gradually resolved and administrative procedures stabilised. A partial disadvantage in administration of payments was inconsistency in administration between the NSS level and the MA level, as the NSS originally set rather benevolent deadlines for beneficiaries to deliver source documents from monitoring reports. Therefore, the MA took a decision on better coordination and the necessity of meeting deadlines and enforcing deadlines for DPs by NSS employees.

However, DPs criticise the rather high PWC staff turnover, especially for the checks of monitoring reports. Projects are not exclusively assigned to specific employees, and monitoring reports are assigned for checks according to NSS employees' current workload. In spite of its negatives, the system also has positive characteristics as it allows checking the reports efficiently in a short period of time, with concurrently set mechanisms for transferring information about the projects. In terms of the application of mainstreaming during Action 2 and 3, however, the issue has wider consequences for the CIP EQUAL implementation because a new employee is able to find their bearings in the programme after several months but there is the question of the employee's capability to provide assistance, consulting and overall help in the implementation of projects – especially in the application of mainstreaming. The evaluator's team believes that the high employee turnover did not help solve the problem. In view of the specific nature of CIP EQUAL, it will be necessary to specify the conditions and possibilities for communication and the MA's prospective checks concerning the staffing and anticipated changes in staff more precisely in similar programmes for 2007 – 2013 in order to avoid negative effects on the implementation of such programmes.

A suitable future tool for resolving similar administrative issues in the implementation of ESF programmes in 2007 – 2013 seems to be the continuous creation of typology for partial problems and applicable alternatives for remedy. This is already done to some extent in the presentation of regular reports on NSS activities, where we can see attempts at identifying “bottlenecks” in the implementation of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic. An example can be the procedure of “project completion”, which was not quite clear at the beginning of 2007, making the DPs doubtful in way of solution, and therefore they were entirely unable to

prepare well and plan appropriate activities.⁵³ This rather crucial issue was the subject matter of a seminar held on 14 September 2007, where DP representatives were introduced to the key aspects of project completion, such as:⁵⁴ the recommended schedule of completion work on projects, the format for the final technical and financial monitoring reports, the MA's guidelines on project completion together with explanations for the most frequently asked questions.

The above findings and information about the perception of the NSS were further confirmed by the web questionnaire results, with an obvious continuity of opinion among DP representatives with the results of the previous evaluation reports⁵⁵ in which the DPs had a good opinion of the NSS (PWC) during Action 2 and 3. In structured interviews, DP representatives also rated very highly the speed, accuracy and expertise of responses to problems that occurred in the projects, describing the good approach as "client-oriented" (good ratings were also given to the "help-line" system, where beneficiaries can consult their questions, which are also collected and analysed, during specified hours). In this respect, it should be stressed that there was also a shift and improvement in the perception of MA activities during the last year, 2007.⁵⁶

Main positives of NSS (PWC) activities include:

- Factuality, speed, correctness and more logic in the handling of administrative procedures,
- Client-oriented approach in contact with DPs.

Main negatives of NSS (PWC) activities include:

- Delayed onset of its own activities and the tackling of DP problems – after the partial introductory period in the CIP EQUAL implementation – and thus a greater emphasis put just on the technical and administrative aspects of projects at the beginning, which improved considerably in the course of time (this also resulted in the initially lower interest in the implementation of the subject matter of projects and their support in mainstreaming, and focusing activities on DP support in their continuation under CIP EQUAL by removing administrative barriers),
- High personnel turnover, which complicated the submitting of monitoring reports by DPs, who often had to re-submit already submitted source documents. On the other hand, this negative aspect promoted the factuality and speed of administrative processes through more efficient allocation of human resources in the NSS system.

NSS role in the promotion of mainstreaming

Even though NSS activities get a very good response from the DPs, with especially high ratings given to the "supportive" role in the administration of DP projects, on the whole the

⁵³ This concerns e.g. the eligibility of expenditures, planning of human resources and own funds for the formal completion of a project (such as the preparation of the last technical and financial monitoring reports).

⁵⁴ MoLSA (2007d), p. 2

⁵⁵ See e.g. EURO SERVICE GROUP; AUDITCOM; INTERMUNDIA (2006), p. 70

⁵⁶ See the "Brief summary of answers to question 2.01A01 from the web questionnaire" below

MA's original intention focused on providing comprehensive "supporting" activities in CIP EQUAL. Both the web questionnaire and the structured interviews with DP representatives have shown that the NSS fulfils its role of assistant programme administrator but less assistance was aimed at the subject matter of the implementation of projects and thus the programme, which is due not only to the above-mentioned employee turnover. The main creators of the professional aspect of mainstreaming are the individual DPs, whose scope of activities is very wide across different fields (e.g. rehabilitation for work from a medicinal point of view, methodology for teaching foreign languages or training in business matters). In respect of these issues, the NSS's more active position in the promotion of mainstreaming became generally more complicated for any institution in the role of NSS.

In general, the NSS also focuses on the organisation of NTN meetings, which are considered to be a tool for the promotion of the mainstreaming of main products created under CIP EQUAL. The NSS plays the role of the provider of premises and organiser of the meetings for the MA, but certain shortcomings can be seen in the coordination of the meetings especially with external experts from outside CIP EQUAL. It is clear that the criticised insufficient interest in the mainstreaming process taken by representatives from the public administration and other external experts, which might be more affected, i.e. by the approach to a higher level of accommodation and coordination of NTN meetings with prospective external stakeholders in the mainstreaming process. Due to little emphasis put on the expert aspects of the CIP EQUAL implementation, the National Support Structure also failed to provide the Managing Authority with source documents in a fully satisfactory form usable for wide mainstreaming at the programme/national level. In this respect, the role of external experts (e.g. expert coordinators/sponsors in NTNs) in this position should have been strengthened more in the direction of the support of expert activities and the creation of source documents by NSS personnel. The NSS relied on the overall responsibility of vertical mainstreaming at the MA in this respect.

The role of a similar NSS in the programming period of 2007 – 2013 should not be just administrative; rather, it should be more proactive and initiatory in expert matters. However, this issue has a long-term context in the overall perception of the implementation of programmes funded by EU SFs, i.e. placing emphasis mainly on the correct administrative handling of a project and using up all planned funds without much emphasis on the fulfilment of the project's physical subject matter (except for checks on the fulfilment of monitoring indicators whose definition and fulfilment is often criticised by other evaluations).⁵⁷ Already in 2005, various evaluations focusing on the general system of implementation focused on the evaluation of the role of supporting structures, pointing out the necessity of an overall "cultural change" in the perception of their position, from intermediaries to executors, in this context (see e.g. MRD (2007), p. 13). For the next period of 2007 – 2013 it is therefore increasingly necessary to specify and emphasise the exceptional

⁵⁷ The umbrella evaluation analysis for monitoring and monitoring indicators, their setup in 2004 – 2006 and the drawing of recommendations for the next programming period was evaluation project 6/04 – Assessment of indicators and the suitability of their setup, coordinated by the MRD. The objective of the analysis was the overall assessment of the setup and informational value of indicators for the Community Support Framework and operational programmes, followed by the preparation of proposals for possible adjustments to the indicator system for the programming period of 2007–2013 (this concerned indicators at the level of priority axes, specific targets and horizontal objectives of the CSF and the priorities of individual OPs).

role of supporting and liaison structures in the implementation system of ESF funded programmes within their activities, i.e. especially the support of the actual absorption capacity and the expert coordination on the focus of specific measures of similar nature as CIP EQUAL.

A recommendation in this context seems to be the improvement of the environment and set links between the MA level and the NSS entity, i.e. by means of a clear and specific contract between the programme MA and the entity playing the role of the supporting structure⁵⁸, especially with respect to the common coordination of supporting structure staffing, much more emphasis placed on the role of an expert liaison body for the MA programme sponsor, the provision of a true/real client-oriented approach to project implementers (i.e. assigning specific consultants to individual projects in order to ensure smooth administration and professional continuity for project coordination) and data archiving methods within the MSSF.⁵⁹

3.2.3 Context of progress at the MA level to date

There has been considerable progress in the implementation of relevant recommendations at the level of the MA since the previous evaluation reports. The most serious problems have been tackled in an effort to link the activities with the overall concept and meaning of CIP EQUAL.

After performing structured interviews at all levels, i.e. MA, NSS and DP, it was apparent that the situation with CIP EQUAL implementation was very bad in terms of administration but now administrative procedures have been brought into line with DP projects considerably in this comparison. The initial problems with CIP EQUAL were resolved very slowly at the MA level because they were crucial and complex legal or financial issues.

In view of the negative experience with the administration and cash-flow of projects, the MA resolved to highly simplify some implementation aspects during 2006 and 2007:

- Optional shortening of the monitoring period (at least 1 month),
- Transfer of undocumented expenditures to the next monitoring report,
- Possibility to increase the initial advance payment,
- Higher coordination and control of deadlines for the NSS – deadlines for DPs were set by the NSS rather benevolently at the beginning, which often resulted in delays at the programme level, e.g. in the issue of financing of projects.

⁵⁸ Intimately see the chapter 3.3.2, part “*Paradigm for private entities’ involvement in the implementation of ESF-funded programmes*”

⁵⁹ The NSS does not currently put attachments that change on the basis of applications for project changes into the folders of individual beneficiaries for the needs of the users of IS MSSF Monit – this concerns especially schedules, the description of activities, and the budget. The NSS has chosen storage in its electronic archives for these administrative steps, with information and source documentation available to authorised persons on request. According to the NSS, this procedure is more efficient, but it is not fully according to the other contracting party, i.e. the MA.

The above steps led on to ensuring a sufficient and stable flow of funds to beneficiaries, providing the necessary cash-flow.

Internal administrative arrangements at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs do not pose any significant problems to the CIP EQUAL implementation. Obstacles to the CIP EQUAL implementation could be seen mainly in the external environment during 2007 and the last months. These are, in particular:

- Obstacles to smoother administration are posed mainly by the national legislation, e.g. budgetary rules that do not allow providing aid to beneficiaries e.g. in the form of grant agreements – they have to follow the subsidy path, which causes e.g. a problem with the inability to withdraw a part of subsidy for unused funds or non-performed activities.
- At a general level, there was a problem with the MF non-assigning funds to standard MoLSA budget items in 2007, which resulted in the necessity to draw on the reserve fund. However, this posed no risk to payments on payment applications as there were enough funds in the reserve funds and this rather was just a technical matter. However, the situation occurred again during the preparation of the budget for 2008, when there were no longer sufficient funds in the reserve fund and negotiations had to be held with the Ministry of Finance and within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
- Within budgetary rules, there are unresolved problems concerning irregularities. Although an irregularities department has been created at the MoLSA, there is no unambiguous procedure for handling irregularities, so they are discussed with the MF. This issue could be uniformly resolved by making arrangements similar to those for grant projects implemented under other ESF-funded operational programmes.
- There is still no legislative basis for partnerships that would function as a positive factor for improved partnership efficiency. Therefore, MA representatives are preparing a proposal for the legislative basis in a thematic study on the partnership principle, which will be ordered from an external contractor.

A brief summary of the questionnaire survey concerning the course of Action 2 and 3 in the Czech Republic is provided in Annex 7. Generally, the results from the web questionnaire can be seen as confirmation of positive ratings for the course of Action 2 and 3, especially during 2007. The steps taken by the MA and the NSS are rated very highly in this respect.

3.2.4 Main recommendations for issues from the course of Action 2 and 3

Based on the examination made within the desk research, web questionnaire and structured interviews, the evaluator's team makes the following recommendations:

- In the programming period of 2007 – 2013, it will be necessary to involve external experts much more in the implementation structure of ESF funded programmes in order to increase the expert coordination and guarantee in the making of expert source documentation (e.g. for NTN meetings) at the level of the liaison body. This is not about the replacement of the NSS in mainstreaming but about strengthening it with qualified external experts that can work as expert sponsors in thematic

networks. There should be a well-prepared contract between the programme MA and the entity playing the role of the support structure in similar ESF funded programmes for these issues, clearly specifying much more emphasis on the role of the expert liaison body for the MA's programme sponsor.

- At the beginning of programme implementation, define specific conditions for the provision of human resources in the implementation structure – both the MA and the NSS (e.g. in the form of a personnel audit, analyses of personnel needs in the scope specified in Chapter 5.3 of the CIP EQUAL Management Manual, which will allow identifying weak points in staffing). DPs criticised the rather high PWC staff turnover, affecting in particular the re-submitting of some documents when filing technical and financial monitoring reports. A partial solution to this issue may be thorough records of all questions and tackled problems under the agenda of each project. This would resolve the issue of a high employee turnover by making each newly hired employee study the project implementation “history”, including administrative problems that have already been resolved, before initiating communication with applicants. A disadvantage of this solution is a possible increase in programme administration costs.
- Simplify the administration of projects and the submission of various basic documents for technical and financial monitoring reports – a number of aspects can be reviewed by on-the-spot checks. In this respect, more emphasis should be placed on differentiating “administrative on-the-spot checks” and “monitoring visits”, which should play the role of expert consulting in project implementation. Furthermore, it is advisable in this respect to significantly expand the use of quality software and provide source documents for the above-mentioned interim reports in electronic form during the programming period of 2007 – 2013 (except for project accounts).
- Make changes in the programme implementation in a more strategic way instead of solving specific problems ad hoc (e.g. in the setup of monitoring indicators, their initial testing, etc.) – as there will also be changes in the course of the implementation of the individual ESF funded programmes during the new programming period, it is necessary to follow certain rules for the implementation of such changes. This especially concerns informing about prepared changes in a timely manner and giving the applicants a chance and support to prepare for the changes.
- A suitable future tool for resolving similar administrative issues in the implementation of ESF programmes in 2007 – 2013 seems to be the continuous creation of typology for partial problems and applicable alternatives for remedy. This is already done to some extent in the presentation of regular reports on NSS activities, where we can see attempts at identifying “bottlenecks” in the implementation of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic.
- Map the necessary prerequisites for the administrative capacity of potential applicants prior to announcing the individual calls, and draw their attention to these aspects still in the course of project application preparation – some DP representatives confirmed in the structured interviews that personnel and financial matters in the project design had sometimes been underestimated during the

preparation of their project for CIP EQUAL, which resulted in heavy demands on the administrative and implementation agenda of the project. The preparation of technical and financial reports is rather complicated, especially for DPs with a large number of partners.

- The MAs of the new generation of operational programmes for 2007 – 2013 should take much greater account of the type of entity of the potential applicant/final beneficiary in their calls, in particular for non-profit organisations. The advance and continuous financing system is a matter of life or death for this type of entity.

3.3 Setup of administration system and procedures

This chapter discusses analysis of the existing setup of the administration system, procedures and personnel capacities of CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic. Using structured interviews and web questionnaires, the research concerned the extent to which recommendations made by the evaluator of the 2nd phase of evaluation of CIP EQUAL were implemented, in particular the MA's personnel capacity, including professional qualification, the existence of clear definitions of procedures, including management methods, the definition of roles, responsibilities and delegation of authority of implementation entities and their communication. The research also focused on handling monitoring reports, problems with project administration from the point of view of the NSS such as data archiving, the existence of the optimum methodology, the level of application of EC principles and the flexibility of the implementation system of Action 3 in terms of legislative effects.

Legislative framework

The legislative framework for the implementation of CIP EQUAL from the perspective of European law is defined by Article 20(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999, laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds, and by Communication from the Commission COM(2000)853, establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL, as an independent form of assistance from structural funds relating to international co-operation in promoting new methods of fighting all forms of discrimination and inequalities related to the labour market. The Community Initiative EQUAL has been launched by the EC in continuation of the previous Community Initiatives, ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, and in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 it is to be implemented in the programme period 2000–2006. Based on Article 21(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999, laying out the single fund principle for Community Initiatives, the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL is financed from structural funds using only the resources from ESF. Other regulations governing the implementation of CIP EQUAL are Communications of the EC concerning the procedural rules for each round of CIP EQUAL. This is communication COM(2000) 853 and communication COM(2003) 840 for the second round of CIP EQUAL (Excerpted from a programme document CIP EQUAL in the CR).

A detailed description of the implementation arrangement of CIP EQUAL is contained in Chapter 4 of CIP EQUAL. The Programming Complement then contains just information complementing the description of the implementation arrangement already provided in CIP

EQUAL, with emphasis on the description of areas resulting from Art. 18(3)(e) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999.

The administration system is elaborated (in relation to the above-mentioned European legislation) and set up in much detail throughout the implementation structure, by continually updated

- CIP EQUAL Management Manual – last version .0 from 9/6/2008 prepared by the MoLSA
- NSS Activities Manual – last version 1.3 from 2007 prepared by PWC
- Beneficiary Guide to Action 2 and 3 – last version 1.6 from 19 May 2008 prepared by the MoLSA
- Beneficiary Guide to Action 3 – last version 1.2 from 19 May 2008 prepared by the MoLSA

which are based on the CIP EQUAL Programming Document including its complement. The documents describe in great detail the procedures for all activities performed by the MA, NSS and DPs, including the definition of responsibilities. After the initial trouble, in particular within Action 1, where the first experience was gathered, the administration system is generally set up well starting with Action 2 and 3.

3.3.1 Context of progress and development to date

The initially reported insufficient personnel capacity of the MA at the time of the completion of Action 1 was due to the assumption of a number of new activities in connection with reviewing beneficiaries' monitoring reports and administering payment applications instead of the NSS for Action 1, plus lack of system positions. The situation was resolved to some extent by using TA funds in the CIP EQUAL programme for outsourcing. The range of activities of the MA's external collaborators was further extended in 2006 with the control of the quality of work of the National Support Structure for Action 2 and 3 in order to improve quality control for technical and financial monitoring reports.

Based on the conclusions reached by the evaluator of the 2nd phase of CIP EQUAL evaluation in December 2006 (EURO SERVICE GROUP 2006), the following recommendations were made for the next period:

- Increase the number of MA employees.
- Put emphasis on the evaluation of technical MRs, especially in relation to the implementation of the EQUAL principles.
- Initiative approach on the part of the NSS, in particular providing support in the field of the EQUAL principles. It was recommended for the MA, NSS, MC, NTN to pay due attention to this field, provide sufficient support for it and then undergo systematic control in order to identify problems and plan further support.
- Prepare various simple guides, which should undoubtedly include methodology for the archiving of data and documents, methodology for project evaluation, methodology for project organisation and management, methodology for project completion, etc.

In 2007, the Managing Authority adopted a number of measures to make further progress in the administration system, procedures and personnel capacities under CIP EQUAL.

Positive development from Action 1 is also evidenced by the fact that EC auditors included the system of work control of the national support structure, including the financial settlement, among best practices in the final report on the CIP EQUAL management and control system audit in the Czech Republic in October 2006 (No. 2004 CZ 050 PC 001). The system consists in the NSS pursuing its activities for Action 2 and 3 in accordance with their annual *working plans*, which are approved by the MA and consulted with the CIP EQUAL MC. They are further elaborated in quarterly plans of NSS activities and detailed monthly plans. In addition, the NSS prepares detailed quarterly *reports on NSS activities* according to the MA's requirements. The reports follow the above-mentioned working plan, describing the actual steps and pursued activities and containing a section concerning the use of funds, analysis of the current situation and recommendations for the next period. The NSS may only file the relevant invoice for a period after the reports are approved by the MA.

3.3.2 Main findings and conclusions

In 2007, the MA's personnel capacity was successfully increased to the current 8 employees according to the evaluator's recommendations (including 5 project managers, 2 financial managers and 1 department manager). The negotiations within the MoLSA were very difficult in this respect, since all governments (including the current one) stated in their policy statements (www.vlada.cz) that the number of employees in the public administration would be annually decreased. This slight increase in the personnel capacity in the MA was part of the restructuring of activities and related personnel shifts at the MoLSA and the costs of the employees are covered from the programme's TA.

CIP EQUAL implementation system in Slovakia

The implementation system in Slovakia is virtually identical in its make-up to the implementation system in the Czech Republic. The Managing Authority (MA) of the programme is the ESF Management Section of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family. It is responsible for the provision of all coordination and methodological activities needed to use the funds allocated to CIP EQUAL according to set rules. Direct control and support for project implementation is ensured by the NSS, the role is played by the Social Development Fund, an organisation subsidised by the MLSAF of the Slovak Republic. It is discussed in a separate part of this evaluation. The MA independently performs these activities (the evaluator picked just activities relevant for programme implementation, leaving out activities such as the "creation of the programming document", etc.):

- Creating and updating the Managing Authority's internal manual
- Taking care of the selection procedure for aid applications, including follow-up activities (preparing the agreement, signing the agreement)
- Preliminary financial control of final beneficiary applications
- Performing on-the-spot checks according to predefined methods of risk analysis and assessment

- Approving payment applications and re-submitting them to authorised bodies
- Preparing and presenting reports on identified irregularities to authorised bodies
- Archiving all source documentation related to project implementation for 10 years after the last payment to the final beneficiary
- Monitoring projects for at least 5 years after the non-repayable financial contribution agreement comes into effect
- Convening and coordinating workgroups
- Preparing interim and final reports on programme implementation
- Preparing annual reports on programme implementation for the Paying Authority
- Providing training to its employees
- Methodically coordinating NSS activities

CIP EQUAL MA activities in Slovakia are performed by 11 employees in total. The proportional break-down is as follows: Monitoring – 3 employees, eligible expenditure management – 5 employees and programming – 3.

The structured interviews with the MA and DPs have also shown that generally this capacity of 8 employees should be sufficient if the professional quality of documentation provided by the NSS were ensured. This problem is however intensified within CIP EQUAL by the total width of activities and operations, which is very wide and demanding for any entity in the context of creating highly qualified documentation. The issues could therefore be resolved e.g. by a higher level of involvement of possible expert sponsors from the individual NTN. The latest version 5.0 of the CIP EQUAL Management Manual from 31/5/2007 thus newly includes Chapter 5.3 Analyses of personnel needs. Semi-annual assessments of the employees of Department 724 of the MoLSA provide information about their qualifications for performing tasks to be implemented in the next period; more importantly, these analyses will determine whether or not the existing personnel capacities are sufficient. Should insufficient personnel capacities be detected, procedures would be specified in a manual, in relation to a change in the CIP EQUAL technical assistance, which would allow delegating some tasks to external collaborators.

In the structured interviews, most DPs rate highly the fact that there was a change at the level of the NSS – from NVF to PWC – at the beginning of the implementation of Action 2 in CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic. Respondents to the structured interviews usually do not come into direct contact with the MA, so they cannot tell whether or not the MA's personnel capacity is sufficient. Some DP representatives that do come into direct contact with the MA pointed out the issue of high MA staff turnover at the beginning of the CIP EQUAL implementation in the Czech Republic. However, this issue did not prove to be crucial, as Dept 724 of the MoLSA, which was delegated the obligations and powers of the CIP EQUAL Managing Authority by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, is one of MoLSA departments with generally negligible personnel turnover.

Similar answers were given by DP representatives in respect of the professional qualification of MA employees. More than half of the respondents answer that they are not able to judge

the matter because they usually do not come into direct contact with MA employees. Some deduce that the professional qualification of MA employees probably satisfies the requirements imposed on them, considering the fact that the CIP EQUAL programme got underway. Respondents that occasionally get in direct contact with specific MA employees describe them to be “professional”.

In connection with the various opinions on the personnel capacity of the MA and NSS and the sufficient qualification of its employees, the level of effect on the NSS’s internal organisational structure was examined in terms of the number and quality of consultants, their transferability and changes in sub-procedures based on available materials.

With regard to the complex nature of the implementation of CIP EQUAL projects and expertise at the level of individual DPs, the contract documents for the selection of a NSS representative for the 2nd phase of the CIP EQUAL programme could specify the criterion of project manager allocation to each project, and the possibility of consultative cooperation with the MA in adjustments to the NSS’s specific internal organisation, including consultation over operational changes or the obligation to regularly inform of changes in the NSS team. This policy could better promote continual adjustments to the situation in the implementation of the programme. Of course, if additional activities are requested from the NSS, the MA should have mechanisms to fund them. This opinion cannot be analysed in more detail because the evaluation team does not have access to the contract between the NSS and the MoLSA.

After studying the available versions of the NSS manual, the evaluation team confirms changes in the NSS team. The result is a situation in which the high NSS staff turnover may result in shortcomings in staff qualification and especially knowledge of specific projects under CIP EQUAL.

PWC was chosen as the NSS in a selection procedure and the course of implementation showed that PWC was very active at the beginning, resolving a number of expert issues (e.g. expert matters concerning VAT and other problems), and this approach was rated very highly by the MA and the DPs. However, this activity decreased after the most serious administrative and implementation problems were resolved and PWC gradually started to focus on the performance of the scope of activities defined by the basic terms and conditions in the contract.

The NSS made an operational change in procedures for the archiving of sub-documents. In respect of data archiving, it was found that in deviation from the standard established procedures the NSS did not put attachments to MRs into the folders of individual beneficiaries for the needs of the users of MSSF Monit. Instead, it stores them in its el. archives where they are only available to authorised persons on request. According to the NSS, this procedure should be more efficient. As there is no “fixed” allocation of consultants to specific projects and the assignment is informal, information on the projects, including scanned documents necessary for the check of multiple MRs (work contracts, vehicle roadworthiness certificates, etc.), is kept on a shared disk where it can be accessed by authorised consultants. Together with the specification of responsibilities in the individual versions of the NSS manual, this is theoretically an efficient system allowing a high level of consultant flexibility and substitutability. During the structured interviews with the DPs, however, there were negative comments on repeated requests for documents that should have been archived at the NSS and on consultants’ unfamiliarity with the projects.

Nonetheless, the comments mainly concerned the beginning of PWC's activities as the NSS, i.e. until about mid-2006.

Additional changes, aimed mainly at the improvement of cash-flow for small beneficiaries, consisted in the Managing Authority's permission for the beneficiaries to submit monitoring reports at intervals shorter than 3 months (the minimum interval is 1 month). The optional shortening of the monitoring period is applied when a lot of funds are used and subsequently included in beneficiaries' payment applications. By agreement with the Beneficiary Committee and in consultation with the NSS, the MA also admitted the possibility of transferring undocumented beneficiary expenditures from a submitted financial MR to the next MR, and the possibility to increase the initial advance payment for beneficiaries in a critical financial situation. To get funds in this way, however, the beneficiary had to meet requirements for, and especially, compliance with deadlines for the submitting of MRs. Another reason was the informal benevolent deadlines specified by the NSS for beneficiaries. Thanks to these steps, the MA managed to ensure sufficient cash-flow for the beneficiaries.

NSS personnel capacity in the Czech Republic

This part serves as the factual basis for the assessment of the personnel capacity of the Czech NSS (PWC), which more or less formally documents the continually changing NSS staffing. The following data is based on the individual versions of the NSS manual, from which information about the individual positions and their changes was taken. Therefore, the following data was broken down into "periods" according to the versions, with the most important versions being the last two, no. 1.2 and 1.3. The following part contains a list of changes. For periods after 1. 10. 2007 "NSS team summary" documents were provided. These summaries also contain calculation of particular positions within NSS team. Accidentally it wasn't possible to allocate time costingness to concrete activities which are provided by particular consultants. So the time costingness was compared to activities implemented during the period at the aggregated level. Even after this comparison it wasn't possible to

assert if NSS detaches for particular activities sufficient time capacity or no. On the other hand, due to the phase of the CIP EQUAL implementation, it is likely that majority of the added time capacity was used for monitoring purposes (TMR, FMR)-. Analysis of NSS staff qualification wasn't possible due to absence of relevant sources.

From period 4 every "period" has its own commentary. During "periods" 4.-8- which are comparable with timeline of 1. 10. 2007 – 1. 9. 2008 there is visible significant increase of staff with specialisation on FMR control. During this time there is also minimal staff fluctuation. Majority of consultants works on his/ her starting or similar position more than 6 months.

These consultants are those who control TMR and FMR-

Note:

Provided time capacity = time costingness of particular positions in NSS team was recounted to full – time job costingness (1,0 time capacity corresponds to 160h/month).

1.0 – from 09/2005 – Period 1

TMR checks – 1 consultant

FMR checks – 1 consultant

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 1 consultant

It is not clear who is responsible for mainstreaming, although it was not crucial at that stage.

1.1 – 2005–2006 – Period 2

TMR checks – 2 consultants

FMR checks – 2 consultants

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 2 consultants

It is not clear who is responsible for mainstreaming, although it was not crucial at that stage.

1.2 – 08/2006 – Period 3

TMR checks – 6 consultants

FMR checks – 7 consultants

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 2 consultants

NTN – 2 consultants

1.3 – 1/10/2007 – Period 4

Provided capacity – 7x 1,0 full time i. e. 1120h/ month. There was also further unspecified capacity “designated as „ other specialists (taxes, law) when requested“.

TMR checks – 7 consultants

FMR checks – 9 consultants

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 3 consultants

NTN – 3 consultants

Up to 1/1/2008 – Period 5

Provided capacity – 10,2x 1,0 full time i. e. 1630h/ month. There was also further unspecified capacity “designated as „ other specialists (taxes, law) when requested“.

TMR checks – 7 consultants

FMR checks – 14 consultants plus 2 consultants without time costingness specification (only note “when requested”)

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 3 consultants

NTN – 3 consultants

During this period there was most significant increase of staff commissioned to control of FMR. From the point of view of time costingness there was third highest provided time capacity in this period.

Up to 1/6/2008 – Period 6

Provided capacity – 11,4x 1,0 full time i. e. 1824h/ month. There was also further unspecified capacity "designated as „ other specialists (taxes, law) when requested“.

TMR checks – 7 consultants

FMR checks – 15 consultants

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 3 consultants

NTN – 3 consultants

Most significant trend in this period is maintenance of high number of NSS staff. Compared to previous period there is interesting increase of provided time capacity (possible reason is increase of importance of FMR control)

Up to 1/7/2008 – Period 7

Provided capacity – 12,1x 1,0 full time i. e. 1936h/ month. There was also further unspecified capacity "designated as „ other specialists (taxes, law) when requested“.

TMR checks – 8 consultants

FMR checks – 16 consultants

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 3 consultants

NTN – 3 consultants

During this period there was highest time capacity provided which is interesting in particular to previous period.

Up to 1/9/2008 – Period 8

Provided capacity – 9x 1,0 full time i. e. 1440h/ month. There was also further unspecified capacity "designated as „ other specialists (taxes, law) when requested“.

TMR checks – 8 consultants

FMR checks – 12 consultants

Answers to beneficiaries, website updates – 3 consultants

NTN – 3 consultants

During this period there was substantial decrease of staff number as well as provided time capacity.

This list clearly shows that the NSS expanded its team as the demands on its work grew. No

specific consultants (or positions) were assigned to mainstreaming (or NTN support) until August 2006, which was not a problem considering the factual situation.

Changes in the team are shown in the following list, which focuses on the specific names of positions and on how long the employees participated in the job.

Changes in consultants – positions :

How many people work at the NSS throughout the duration of the job – 2 persons

Director

Senior consultant 1, or manager 1

Office workers 2

How many people worked at the NSS for seven periods (according to versions of the manuals and NSS team summaries) – 1 person

Consultant 3 (or more precisely 6 and 5)

How many people worked at the NSS for six periods (according to versions of the manuals and NSS team summaries) – 1 person

How many people work at the NSS for five periods (according to versions of the manuals and NSS team summaries) – 7 persons

Consultants 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 8a and 9 – consultants responsible for FMR and TMR control.

How many people work at the NSS for four periods (according to versions of the manuals and NSS team summaries) – 4 persons

Consultants 3, 7, 8 – TMR and FMR control – 4 persons

How many people work at the NSS for three periods (according to versions of the manuals and NSS team summaries) – 3 persons

Consultant 1(change as of 1/10/2007) – 1 person

Consultant 8 – FMR control - 2 persons, each worked at the position for at least 6 months

How many people worked at the NSS for two periods (according to versions of the manuals and NSS team summaries) – person

Senior consultant 2 – leaving at the latest in 08/2006

Consultant 2 – “chief” project manager – leaving at the latest in 08/2006

Office worker 1 (2 changes) – 2 persons

Consultant 5 – TMR and FMR control - 2 persons, each worked at the position for at least 6 months

How many people worked in just one of the periods (emphasis on the previous period)

These are project and financial managers

1. period – 1 person
2. period – 2 persons
3. period – 3 persons
4. period – 5 persons
5. period – 2 persons
6. period – none
7. period – 2 persons

In spite of the above problems, most respondents are inclined to think that the setup of communication between the MA and other implementation entities is satisfactory for the requirements specified in the CIP EQUAL programming documentation as well as for the beneficiaries, i.e. they receive a sufficient amount of information and methodological support (in other words, information flows are set at 50–75% of the optimum in terms of demands on administration and time). On the other hand, very high ratings are given to the field concerning methodological support, which takes advantage of experience from abroad. In terms of the administration system setup, a positive rating can be given to changes in methodologies concerning the documentation of eligible expenditure, specifically the simplification of the cost accounting method, clearly structured work statements, budget aggregation, travel expenses, operating and overhead costs. Electronic communication is optimal, as it is the fastest of all available methods of contact. The change in the NSS representative (PWC for NVF) led to improvement in the speed of approval and the simplification of technical and financial MRs.

Within the national legislation, it is necessary to deal with budgetary rules. The budgetary rules do not solve problems related to irregularities, concerning the withdrawal of just a part of subsidy in question. An irregularities department has been created at the MoLSA but there are no unambiguous instructions for reporting suspected irregularities. This can be resolved by arrangements similar to those of grant projects under other OPs.

In terms of legislation, it is also necessary to provide a basis for partnerships that would function as a positive factor for improved partnership efficiency.

The results of the questionnaire survey using the web interface are provided in annex 5. Generally, a partial conclusion that can be drawn from this survey is that there was a considerable growth in the DPs' experience during 2007 and the collaboration of all implementation entities improved in many aspects during the period.

Paradigm for private entities' involvement in the implementation of ESF-funded programmes

In the light of what was mentioned above, it is advisable to elaborate on the nature of the further involvement of private entities in the implementation of programmes funded from public (national or EU) funds. These issues were discussed in an expert panel concerning the mainstreaming principle (held on 25 June 2008).⁶⁰ The expert panel drew conclusions that point out clear differences in the nature of collaboration and approach between NVF and PWC in the role of the NSS. While NVF was a private entity, nevertheless the founder was an entity from the public sector, and therefore it was rather rigid and not very flexible in its actions, which in the upshot adversely affected the level of the “liaison body”, which should function as a true “supporting” body in CIP EQUAL. PWC with its knowledge of the operation of EU structural funds in the Czech Republic, on the other hand, approached especially the handling of problematic areas for the DP level very actively (e.g. resolving a dispute concerning VAT). However, what proved to pose problems in the course of time was the uniqueness of CIP EQUAL, which is funded from EU structural funds but the focus of activities under the individual projects was, after all, different from projects funded from standard operational programmes. Still, DP representatives clearly perceive the change at the NSS level as highly positive, with the increased staff flexibility having a considerable effect on their activities – in spite of the above-mentioned staff turnover, which is however typical for the public sector, too (especially in multi-annual programmes).

In general, the expert panel came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to involve more private subjects at the level of “liaison bodies” during the programming period of 2007 – 2013, and possibly in the next period. This conclusion is possible to confirm in the sense that private entities have generally higher rate of its own flexibility and ability of adaptability to new conditions of internal and also external environment. Partly, these aspects are involved in a approach of “New Public Management”, which according to Wright (2002, pp. 16)⁶¹ radically redefined a management of public administration in Britain. This approach is based especially on effective sources utilising for achievement of high quality of provided services, competitive environment between public and private sector in providing of services, market oriented approach (citizens are perceived as a consumers) and high level of responsibility for results of manager. This approach is going to be developed in countries of Central and Eastern countries of Europe. The evaluator’s team agrees with the context on condition that it is necessary to define the powers, competences and obligations in the “contractor-client” relation as precisely as possible in order to make the mutual relations clear. As the evaluator’s team does not have access to the contract between the MA and the NSS, it is not possible to point out possible shortcomings directly. In spite of that, we consider these issues crucial with respect to the established environment and the complicated mutual relations between the two entities. Partial possibility of solution of this topic is a possibility of activities regulating via methodological (obligatory) directions, what would be possible to

⁶⁰ The expert panel on mainstreaming held on 25/6/2008 was attended by (alphabetical order): Jan Blahůšek (MoLSA), Marie Čauševic (IREAS), Emil Machálek (IREAS), Martin Pělucha (IREAS), Magda Piroutková (Czech Association of Business and Professional Women), Tomáš Řička (University of Economics, Prague), Ivana Sobolíková (PWC – NSS), Oto Potluka (IREAS), Vladimír Sodomka (IREAS), Radek Taptič (IREAS).

⁶¹ WRIGHT, G., NEMEC, J. (2002); *Management veřejné správy – Teorie a praxe: zkušenosti z transformace veřejné správy ze zemí střední a východní Evropy (Management of public administration – Theory and practice: experience from transformation of public administration of Central and Eastern European countries)*, NISPAcee, Czech edition 2003, Ekopress

involve in a contractual securing. This is due to a problem, that it is very hard to include the whole complexity and new experience from continuously achieved during the programme realization to any contractual securing aimed on a administration of multiannual programmes. With private entities' greater involvement in aid scheme administration, it is also necessary to pay increased attention to the choice of contractors to observe the conditions of transparency, non-discrimination and equal approach to all applicants as strictly as possible. The contracting authority should use legal counselling services as much as possible (whether internal or outsourced). In the preparation of award procedures, it should also ensure close cooperation among employees dealing with the matters in question, collaborating with legal counsellors that can review the matters in terms of legal requirements. In connection with this, there is also the question of the possibility of linking the successful usage of allocated funds to the financing of a private entity playing the role of the NSS. At first glance, this may seem an understandable tool to coordinate and motivate the "liaison body" to achieve the highest usage possible; nevertheless, there are several factors at play that would make the approach materially complex and unfeasible:

- ESF-funded projects are usually smaller and coordination by the level of money usage is generally very difficult.
- The focus of CIP EQUAL projects was very variable and required very complex approaches to decrease their administrative and implementation demands.
- Moreover, ESF projects (this was absolutely specific in the case of CIP EQUAL) belong to the category of soft projects with effects that are often only visible in the long run. Therefore, the concern should not be about the successful level of fund usage (even if it is important, of course) but mainly about the physical and high-quality fulfilment of the set objectives of projects and the programme.

Therefore, some matters may seem very simplified, in a way that is very hard to achieve in practice. In spite of that, more intensive involvement of private entities in the implementation of ESF-funded programmes seems to be a promising option for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure, although there exist partial risks of private entities involvement to the process of implementation (e.g. strict compliance of conditions set in a contract with a Managing Authority, unwillingness to solve issues ultra vires the contract with a regard to profit achievement and such rate of effectivity of delivered activities). In example of mainstreaming issues, it is necessary, that entities in role of NSS have to have experience with activities of results promoting on national or regional level, including experience with lobbying.

3.3.3 Main recommendations for the administration system setup

Based on the examination made within the desk research, web questionnaire and structured interviews, the evaluator's team makes the following recommendations:

- Even though the evaluator did not have access to the complete contract regulating the relation between the NSS and the MoLSA, in general it is possible to recommend that if support providers are to ensure some activities through TA based on contractor-client relations in the programming period of 2007 – 2013, it is necessary to precisely define the amount, scope and quality of the activities in the contractual document. In

case the contractor fails to perform or performs only partially in terms of quality, quantity, deadlines, etc., there should be mechanisms for the effective coordination of occurred problems, with a penalty as a last resort (e.g. reduced remuneration, or the possibility to withdraw from the contract and find another service provider). On the other hand, if the personnel capacity needs to be increased during the programme implementation, there should be the possibility to increase funds from technical assistance.

- Make sure that the rules of transparency, non-discrimination and equal approach are strictly observed in the preparation and execution of contract award procedures. This recommendation is of a rather formal nature and the evaluation team anticipates close cooperation with Department 632 of the MoLSA – the Public Contracts Department.
- Perform continual analysis, review and systematic sorting of methodologies, interpretations, guides and guidelines in terms of their material content and up-to-datedness to ensure their compliance with the currently applicable legislation. Since the umbrella role in the use of finances from structural funds is played by the MRD, it should provide the methodology common for all OPs, including forms, at its level, with any specifics in individual OPs handled by the particular Ministries playing the role of the managing authority. A single website should be established to this end, allowing the individual managing authorities to upload their specific methodologies.
- Suggest the MF to amend the Budgetary Rules Act to make it respect the specifics of EU-funded aid schemes.

3.4 Comparison between the operation of NSSs in the United Kingdom and Slovakia and NSS activities in the Czech Republic

According to the contract documents, this chapter covers three elementary topics related to NSS activities in the Czech Republic and selected EU countries, with a detailed list of activities and their context given in annex 2. These are:

- Comparing the rate to which the NSS activities are relevant and efficient in the CR, Slovakia and the UK
- Assessing the innovation of the NSS activities implemented in the CR
- Identifying activities that have not yet been implemented by the Czech NSS even though it is advisable to do so

In addition to the desk research method, the research is based on materials and consultations on these issues obtained at the competent ministries in the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, structured interviews concerning the NSS activities were held with selected DPs, the NSS and the MA in the Czech Republic. At the level of the DPs, there was also a questionnaire survey focusing on satisfaction with the NSS activities in terms of methodological support, the rate of handling requests for change and the quality and speed of reviews of technical and financial monitoring reports.

The objective of the assessment of the NSS activities in the CR in comparison with the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom is to transfer good practices from those countries, compare the resources used and the setup of the implementation system, and identify additional activities that the NSS could implement in the Czech Republic and the main barriers to their implementation.

Legislative framework

Pursuant to the provisions of Communication from the Commission COM(2000)853 and Communication from the Commission COM(2003)840 giving guidelines for the management of the Community Initiative EQUAL, the managing authority of CIP EQUAL may use the services of an external entity to perform certain portions of its obligations. To ensure proper management of the CIP EQUAL Programme, the MA may contract external entities to perform some of its obligations during the implementation of CIP EQUAL, using funds from Priority 6 Technical Assistance under CIP EQUAL. In accordance with the terminology introduced by Communication from the Commission COM(2000)853 and Communication from the Commission COM(2003)840, one of the external entities is referred to as the National Support Structure (NSS).

3.4.1 NSS in the Czech Republic

At the time of the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, the "second round" of CIP EQUAL was already underway and the MA was to determine how it would set up Action 1 and then Action 2 and 3 from the viewpoint of overall implementation at that time. NSS activities are implemented using TA in the CR. This places the NSS outside the organisational framework of the MoLSA. In Action 1, from the start of the second round of CIP EQUAL, i.e. from July 2004, to the end of October 2005, the role was played by the National EQUAL Office, which was an integral part (section) of Národní vzdělávací fond o.p.s. Then, as a contingency, agendas for Action 1 were taken over by the Czech CIP EQUAL MA until their completion.

For the implementation of Action 2 and 3, a contract for work was concluded between the MoLSA and PriceWaterhouseCoopers Česká republika, s. r. o. based on the results of a selection procedure in July 2005. The multinational company has played its role in the NSS since 2005.

Its obligations include, in particular, organising informative and methodological seminars for beneficiaries, providing consultations and other methodological support to beneficiaries during the implementation of their activities, updating data in the MSSF Monit and ECDB information systems, checking technical and financial MRs, participating, as an invited party, in on-the-spot checks to make sure that information given by beneficiaries in the MRs corresponds to reality, checking payment applications, preparing and distributing numbered instructions and other methodological guidelines for beneficiaries and preparing publicity materials concerning CIP EQUAL.

The NSS is obliged to draw up a report on its activities at defined intervals; the payment of the agreed money is conditional on the MoLSA's approval of the report. Other tools for the MA's control of activities performed by the NSS are checks of written documentation

submitted to the NSS (e.g. financial and technical MRs, payment applications, reports on on-the-spot checks or NTN activities, etc.) and on-the-spot checks to verify the sufficiency and quality of archives management, division of responsibilities among consultants, etc.

Written NSS procedures are reviewed by the MA using records in the control sheet for the control of written NSS procedures. The proper storage of documentation and management of the archives at the NSS is checked by the MA during an on-the-spot check of NSS activities. According to the NSS manual, crucial documents are to be submitted by the NSS for further administration within two business days of their approval by the NSS, but no later than within 10 business days of their receipt by the NSS.

Detailed list of NSS activities in the Czech Republic:

Supporting CIP EQUAL beneficiaries

The main part of the NSS activities consists in providing methodological support to DPs in all their activities, in particular supporting DPs in the effective performance of individual international activities implemented within approved projects, providing consultations and methodological support for DPs in the preparation and processing of interim and final technical and financial reports and applications for payments, supporting DPs in horizontal and vertical mainstreaming and/or providing other support in accordance with the needs of the beneficiaries. The NSS provides support especially by organising informative seminars, by means of a phone and email helpline, the CIP EQUAL website and a mailing list.

The results of the questionnaire survey concerning DPs' satisfaction with NSS activities in the CR are provided in annex 6 to this document. The overall ratings given by the DPs to NSS activities are above average, even though there were some negative comments concerning the high turnover of NSS consultants, too much theory in some papers at the seminars or occasional delays in the handling of requests for change. For more detailed results and partial comments, refer to the above-mentioned annex.

Information systems

For the second round of CIP EQUAL, the MSSF IS makes use of the CENTRAL module, the MONIT module, plus the BENEFIT application and the ETCIM and ECDB databases and the RIFE application; the NSS uses MONIT module, the BENEFIT application and the ETCIM and ECDB databases and the RIFE application.

Applications for funding under CIP EQUAL Priorities 1 – 5 are processed by the applicants themselves in BENEFIT. BENEFIT is then used to load all applications for funding under CIP EQUAL into MSSF MONIT. Responsibility for the transfer of approved data between BENEFIT and MSSF MONIT is held by the NSS.

MONIT is used by the NSS for the purposes of monitoring the entire CIP EQUAL programme. This module of the MSSF information system contains detailed information about all supported DPs and the progress of implementation of their work programmes. The NSS makes sure data in MONIT is updated in relation to information provided by

beneficiaries in their regular MRs, requests for change and payment applications. The data is usually updated once a week, based on the NSS's administration of changes.

The ECDB contains data on the progress of implementation of the individual DP work programmes supported in all EU Member States. The database is located on the EC's official website and there is a User Guide for beneficiaries created by the EC.

During the second round, data in the ECDB should be updated directly by DPs using the RIFE interface. Each beneficiary is obliged to regularly update data concerning their project in the ECDB. The minimum periodicity should correspond to the periodicity of preparing and submitting technical MRs. Beneficiaries list the updates they made in their technical reports.

The NSS has access to RIFE to be able to validate the data changed in the ECDB and then submit it to the ECDB. After changing data in RIFE, beneficiaries inform the NSS by email so that the NSS can validate the data in RIFE and submit it to the ECDB as soon as possible.

The ECDB contains data on all Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCAs) made by DPs supported in individual EU Member States. Data listed in this database is entered by one DP from the TCA that is appointed TCA secretary. The NSS checks the entered TCAs as part of its review of a request for change (or as part of the TCA review before issuing a Resolution).

The NSS cooperated with the MoLSA in the testing of higher versions of MSSF-Monit and MSSF-Benefit, twice a year, including the preparation of test reports as instructed by the MoLSA.

Payment monitoring, checks and administration

The NSS checks 100 % of all TMRs in the first instance and then submits them to the MA together with recommendations for approval or disapproval. MA employees then check both technical and financial MRs to see whether the reports are delivered together with a completed control sheet, and verify the correctness of information completed in the control sheets/MRs in a random sample of reports. For a certain time, the quality of TMR and FMR checks was criticised by the managing authority. Financial MRs are randomly checked on the formal correctness of information in the prepared financial tables and the enclosed copies of accounting documents. The MA also checks random financial MRs for the eligibility of expenditure and always checks the eligibility of any documents in which the MA finds shortcomings during the formal check. The random check also includes verification of whether individual expenditures correspond to activities in the relevant technical MR.

According to the CIP EQUAL Project Check Manual, on-the-spot checks are performed on a 5% sample of MRs by regional employees of the MA; NSS employees are "invited parties" in this case, which is a term originating in the State Control Act. This is due to the fact that PWC as an external entity playing the role of the NSS is not part of the control body, which is the MoLSA.

Another control body is the Internal Audit Department of the MoLSA. A good thing is that employees from the MA and the MoLSA Internal Audit exchange control plans as well as information about the implementation of projects to avoid control redundancy. This approach prevents the unnecessary "wasting" of capacities in the MA as well as other control bodies.

Below we provide a list of activities concerning the mechanisms of checks on beneficiaries:

- Interim checks of technical and financial MRs (these are the elementary tool for monitoring progress in the implementation of projects).
- Checks of payment applications and accounting documents (after the technical and financial MR is approved by the NSS and the MA, the beneficiary is entitled to file a payment application that they generate from BENEFIT. They may only apply for the amount of funds approved on the basis of the MR that are eligible. Only expenditure incurred no sooner than on the date of MA's signature of the DPA and TCA Approval Notice may be approved to be eligible for Action 2 and 3.
- On-the-spot checks of projects (the NSS is authorised to verify that data provided by beneficiaries in their MRs conform to reality in controls performed in the location of project implementation. Those are the MA's checks and the NSS participates in them as an invited party).
- Risk management (risk analysis is used to assess the probability of individual risks, assess their importance and evaluate the need for introducing internal control systems and mechanisms. The level of risk is reflected in the setting of preventive measures and the re-defining of operating procedures in the NSS. The NSS makes its own risk analysis. The prepared risk matrix analyses and describes risks related to the CIP EQUAL administration by the NSS. The risk analysis is prepared at the beginning of NSS activities and risks are reviewed once a year, i.e. by the end of February of each calendar year. Based on the updates of risks, the NSS management system may be enhanced, internal processes may be improved and corrective measures may be taken. Risk management at the implementation level includes random double checks of financial and technical MRs submitted by beneficiaries for approval by the NSS on a randomly selected sample of financial and technical reports. The double checks of financial and technical reports are based on reviewing the correctness of data entered in the control sheet by the financial/technical report reviewer. The selection of reports to check is performed ad hoc; as a minimum, a sample of 10% of reports from the total number of financial and technical reports is reviewed every year).
- Interim and final technical and financial reports for the programme (the NSS prepares an interim technical and financial report for the programme once a year. The report is prepared for the past calendar year by the end of January of the next year).
- Review of audit reports (If the check of interim financial reports shows that a beneficiary requests the reimbursement of cost spent on a project audit, the beneficiary will be asked to present the prepared audit reports together with the financial report in which the cost of the project audit is specified. Without the enclosed audit report, the audit expenditure will not be recognised to be the beneficiary's eligible expenditure and will not be reimbursed).
- Reporting of irregularities identified by the NSS to the managing authority.

Grant decision

All successful applicants are issued a Grant Decision by the MA, on the basis of which the beneficiary receives funds for CIP EQUAL Action 2 and 3/Action 3. The Decision is a legally

binding document containing detailed specifications of all terms and conditions for the funding of project activities.

Source documents for the issue of the Decision are collated by the NSS before it is issued. Information about the control of delivered source documents is recorded in a control sheet.

Administration of changes

In the course of Action 2 and 3, a beneficiary may happen to need to obtain approval for a change in their project from the MA. Changes in information contained in DPAs and TCAs and/or in other parts of the “Decision” must be reported to the MA through the NSS on a completed Request for Change form.

Selection procedures

- The methodological supervision of DP subcontracting (control of compliance with rules in the selection of goods or service suppliers is performed by the NSS as part of the check of a technical/financial report. Responsibility for the checks of source documentation concerning selection procedures is held by employees checking the project’s technical and financial reports with which selection procedure reports are enclosed. The NSS also attends the beneficiaries’ evaluation committee meetings on an as-needed basis).
- NSS selection procedures (if the NSS subcontracts some of its activities from third parties).

National Thematic Networks (NTNs) – national-level coordination and management

The NSS prepares and organises introductory, interim and final conferences in the scope approved by the MA; provides support to and co-organises the meetings of NTNs; collaborates with NTN chairpersons in the preparation of meetings; sends out invitations to NTN meetings and conferences; attends to conferences and meetings related to NTNs; takes the minutes of meetings, distributes the minutes of meetings, updates contacts and makes sure they are distributed; makes sure NTN-related documents are presented on the Community Initiative EQUAL website at www.equalcr.cz and administers the NTN internet platform; keeps a list of NTN members and makes sure materials are distributed among the members and other stakeholders; provides support to NTN chairpersons when establishing contacts with NTN representatives in other countries; provides support to NTN representatives when participating in European Thematic Networks (ETGs) and/or other mainstreaming activities at the European level; evaluates the progress of the national mainstreaming strategy and proposes updates to it according to the evaluation, makes proposals to the MA for appointing new NTN members

Preparation of source documents for financial monitoring, including the monitoring of the use of funds according to the n+2 rule and completion of projects funded from CIP EQUAL

The n+2 rule says that EU commitments for which the Member State does not file a payment application within 2 calendar years following the year of commitment will be voided.

At the end of activities under projects funded from CIP EQUAL, the projects must submit the final technical and financial report. The compliance with project objectives and indicators, DPAs and TPAs is checked as part of the final technical report.

Plans of work and reports on NSS activities

At the end of each calendar year, the NSS prepares a general annual work plan according to the needs of CIP EQUAL implementation. The plan is consulted with the MA and elaborated in quarterly work plans. The annual plan is prepared in good time so that it can be presented to the members of the CIP EQUAL MC after it was consulted with MA employees. Quarterly work plans are presented by the NSS to the MA for commenting usually a month before the beginning of the next quarter and in printed form for approval after the comments have been incorporated.

Certification for priority 1 – 5

There are 4 forms prepared for the purposes of expenditure certification, whose purpose is to document that conditions are met by the MA, liaison bodies and/or final beneficiaries at the given level of implementation, and to determine the amount of funds from each source that was recorded in the accounts of the PU in the certified period. The NSS is responsible for preparing forms B1⁶² for Priorities 1 – 5 of Action 2 and 3 and for preparing the lists of projects that are enclosed with forms B1.

Additional call for Action 3

The NSS provides the MA with assistance in the preparation of base documents needed to make additional calls, in the collection of applications and in the administration of the selection procedure. Based on an amendment to the contract, the NSS also provides consulting to applicants and answers questions by phone and electronic mail and takes care of the organisation and contents of a seminar for potential applicants for aid.

When it receives aid applications, the NSS evaluates the applications from a formal point of view as well as from the point of view of compliance with the CIP EQUAL principles and compliance with the horizontal themes.

For new DPs, the NSS collates source documents for the decision before it is issued.

⁶² Form B1 contains information about certified eligible expenditure for the programme priority, broken down by the source of financing of the expenditure and the period in which the expenditure was certified. It is used to document the amount of expenditure that is certified. This form is accompanied by an enclosure containing the numbers of projects implemented for each measure with differentiated sources of financing of the expenditure that is certified.

3.4.2 Identified differences in the activities of foreign NSSs and main recommendations

The activities of the NSS in the Slovak Republic have from the very beginning been set up in the same manner as in the Czech Republic, where it follows the gathered experience.

Because the NSS in Slovakia is a public institution (an organisation subsidised by the competent ministry since 1 May 2005), there is a different legal status of the NSS in comparison with the CR. If we were to identify differences in the NSS activities in this respect, the managing authority in Slovakia has an opportunity to influence the NSS's work more consistently than in the Czech Republic. The employees of the Social Development Fund performing NSS-related tasks are government employees whose numbers and qualifications are reviewed regularly and the situation is resolved by adjusting their numbers or providing further training if necessary. The Slovakian MA also influences the NSS's operation methodically in a more profound way, which ensures better outputs and allows the MA not to devote so many of its own labour capacities to stricter and more extensive controls of outputs from the NSS. The necessity of an absolutely accurate identification of tasks for the private entity providing NSS activities seems to be a partial recommendation in this respect.

Within the CIP EQUAL management and control system in Slovakia, one of the crucial principles is the principle of separation of functions, which contributes to a good level of internal control. In addition to the CIP EQUAL implementation department (NSS), the SDF has an organisationally separated subsequent control unit. The unit is responsible for performing subsequent financial controls at the beneficiaries, while the ministry's internal audit unit only performs system audits. This is different from the Czech Republic, where the NSS only plays the role of an invited party and controls are performed by the managing authority itself.

Another good thing in Slovakia is the fact that the NSS finalises final MRs with the DPs into the form presented to the MA. In this way, the MA theoretically does not have to control all MRs but only their specimens.

Head positions in Slovakian NTN are held by employees from the NSS, whose activities, as already mentioned, are influenced by the MA much more than in the Czech Republic. In this respect, it is possible to anticipate progress more intensive than in the CR, which is also due to the earlier adoption of the National Mainstreaming Strategy than in the CR.

In the Czech Republic, there are a low number of experts and politicians involved in NTNs that would promote CIP EQUAL results in practice. This is due to their number (6). Besides the NTNs, it is also possible to consider establishing an expert group consisting of experts and politicians like in Slovakia.

The basic difference of the NSS in the United Kingdom, apparent at first glance, is the high level of collaboration between the MA and the NSS. Although the evaluator did not, for obvious reasons, access to the contract between the two entities, the high level of the MA's trust is apparent from the scope of activities, especially in mainstreaming and international collaboration.

Another reason, in addition to the high level of trust, which is evidenced by the length for which ECOTEC has operated as the NSS (since 2001), is, in the evaluator's opinion, the focus

of ECOTEC. It focuses on technical assistance and counselling for public institutions at the national (UK) and European level. The experience with the work and operation of public institutions may be another reason for the high quality of ECOTEC's work.

Within the performed analysis and situation within this evaluation, it has not yet been possible to find out how the MA (DWP) controls ECOTEC's work. Likewise, it has not been possible to check the method of maintaining, expanding and improving the professional qualification of ECOTEC's employees. Considering the organisation of internships for administrators from other NSSs (Slovakia), there is the assumption that ECOTEC takes care of this using its own resources, possibly outsourcing partial courses/training.

According to a compendium of activities delivered by British NSS compared to a Czech NSS, there is in practical no difference. According to a range of delivered activities, there are comparable with conditions in the CR only so called "monitoring visits". Collected documentation shows that the NSS in the United Kingdom performs 50 – 60 monitoring visits every year. The actual scope of support for DPs is insufficient in this area due mainly to the fact that such monitoring visits are performed as "on-the-spot checks" in the CR (pursuant to Act 320/2001 Coll., on financial control). In this respect, the NSS performs on-the-spot checks as an invited party, so there are certain formal limits and demands. It is also doubtful that with 1 to 1.5 days per check it is possible to provide services corresponding to monitoring visits, in addition to obligations arising from the applicable legal regulations.

Recommendations:

- Establish one expert group consisting of experts and politicians in order to strengthen the impacts of CIP EQUAL in practice.
- To emphasis more the methodological DP's support directly by "monitoring visits"

4 Aspects of Implementation of the Mainstreaming Concept

The Chapter on the aspects of implementation of the mainstreaming concept reflects the compliance with the tender terms and conditions for this assessment project. Therefore, some of its parts are mostly of a descriptive nature, in particular the assessment questions nos. 2.04, 2.10 and 2.11. Other tasks have a deeper analytical dimension.

4.1 Evaluation Questions and Answers

Task 2.04: How was the mainstreaming concept interpreted by individual implementation CIP EQUAL subjects (MA, NSS, MC) and development partnerships?

In terms of defining responsibility for the practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle within the Czech Republic, the mainstreaming model based on the NTN and DP activities, in particular, has been employed, although partial responsibility for the coordination of the issue of mainstreaming at the national level has been adopted by the MA (the role of the “person opening the door” to the policy makers at the national level). The role and responsibility of individual CIP EQUAL subjects in the CR is determined by the National Mainstreaming Strategy and it is standard. With regard to this finding, it is essential for the MA CIP EQUAL to create framework agreements with other MAs of the operational programmes financed from the ESF in the programme period 2007–2013 with regard to the possibility of further publicity and practical application of the validated innovative products until now, in particular at all policy levels.

Task 2.05: What mechanisms have been created for the mainstreaming concept in the CR?

The MA have created the following support mechanisms for the implementation of the mainstreaming concept: employing experience from abroad regarding the validation of innovative products and implementation of CIP EQUAL, setting up a coordination NTN group, holding conferences and creating a database of good and bad practice. The NSS carries out the following activities: updating of the National Mainstreaming Strategy on regular basis and writing reports on the implementation of the strategy, providing a help-line for DP representatives and methodical support during the implementation of mainstreaming, coordination of NHS meetings and activities. The MC has closely cooperated with the MA representatives when approving the main steps for successful implementation of the mainstreaming principles. The mechanisms used by the DP are dependent on the nature and focus of the activities of the given project. In terms of vertical mainstreaming, contacts with regional and national representatives have been employed using special products for a potential cooperation with various institutions. Nevertheless, the efficiency of these activities may be affected by potential communication difficulties with people from the decision-making sphere, and often by the unclear political situation or by the fact that relevant policy makers might accentuate other important topical political issues (in other words the competition struggle for the position of a discussed, topical issue on the policy makers' level).

Task 2.06: Evaluation of relevance, complexity, feasibility and sustainability of the mainstreaming strategy created at the national level

In terms of the DP, NTN and MA needs, the National Mainstreaming Strategy has been updated and adapted in order to be relevant for the activities of the stated subjects. The National Mainstreaming

Strategy may be viewed as a complex strategy inviting the inclusion of all significant impacts, processes and factors entering the mainstreaming process at the national level. The complexity of a mainstreaming strategy at the national level must also be evaluated from a long term perspective since the actual enforcement of CIP EQUAL outputs into the legislation system for the coordination of the labour market and the functioning of social policy is viable only over a longer period of time. Till the end of 2007 the feasibility of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level was affected by the operation of individual NTN's that showed a different level of efficiency. In this regard the ongoing updating of the National Mainstreaming Strategy seems to be a suitable and flexible way of addressing feasibility of the activities planned and reaching the determined mainstreaming targets, as it increases the efficiency of the procedures implemented. In the new programme period 2007–2013 suitable conditions and environment for the feasibility of the stipulated CIP EQUAL activities at the national level have been created. With regard to the long-term aspect of the mainstreaming complexity mentioned above it is necessary to include the MA operational programmes financed from the ESF into the activities that are linked by subject to CIP EQUAL by providing a targeted support for these activities.

Task 2.07: Which tools have been developed at the programme level to monitor the course of implementation of the mainstreaming strategy, and what is the relevance and reliability of these tools?

In general, the indicators of mainstreaming have been set up differently to other classical indicators. The compliance level of the monitoring indicators is regularly updated by the NSS when reporting on the implementation of the National Mainstreaming Strategy. Considering the fact that no target values are stipulated, and the data for defined indicators are filled in later, it is difficult to evaluate the success rate of mainstreaming as all NTN's have different objectives. The key condition for regular, good quality monitoring of mainstreaming is continuity in the interpretation of individual indicators. These indicators are collected from individual DPs and they are consequently aggregated at the programme level. It is advisable to test the indicators and the system of collection at the beginning of implementation of any programme. Any changes of the indicators and in particular any changes of their interpretation during the course of the collection causes non-consistency in the final data and lowers the motivation of the subjects that should fulfil the indicators. During the collection of data some very serious problems were experienced in connection with the interpretation of individual data at the programme level at the time of transferring the indicators from paper formats into electronic formats.

Task 2.08: How was the transfer into politics and real practice secured (known as Action 3)?

The material contents of Action 3 have been well developed for horizontal mainstreaming in particular (intensive NTN cooperation, new DPs across individual NTN's). Action 3 has been best accepted by the representatives of projects accepted in Call no. 4. Despite this, it is essential to put emphasis on vertical mainstreaming and the possibility of using the Slovak idea of creating special working groups comprising not only NTN, MA, NSS representatives and external experts, but also representatives of political parties at the national level. The change in strategy of the coordination of vertical mainstreaming in spring 2008 can be evaluated most positively although the previous coordination of this process at the NTN level was not sufficient. In this regard, the MA must carefully monitor,

control and support the main activities of vertical mainstreaming in the last implementation stage of CIP EQUAL. For projects approved within Call no. 5, there is a risk of delay in terms of implementation of additional projects and a risk of a limited actual impact in terms of the mainstreaming principle. Therefore, it will be necessary for NSS and MA to pay more attention to the cooperation with these projects in order to avoid time delays at the programme level in the second half of 2008.

Task 2.09: What DP support mechanisms have been developed to implement the horizontal and vertical DP mainstreaming activities and how efficient are they?

Based on the analysed mechanisms of DP support during the implementation of horizontal and vertical mainstreaming activities, the most efficient mechanism in 2008 has proven to be: an increased support of methodology management and active participation of MA in the mainstreaming process at the programme level, a change of perception with regard to 'spot checks' by the NSS, i.e. emphasising the role of a controller as a potential consultant and advisor for DP, the application of CIP EQUAL experience from the programme period 2007–2013 in terms of OP LZZ (national/programme level for mainstreaming), and the telephone help-line. On the other hand, the methodology handbooks and directives for DP, that had been prepared relatively late, proved not to be very efficient, just like the attempt to emphasise the regional dimension for the operation of NTN.

Task 2.10: Which features and tools is the mainstreaming DP strategy composed of and to what extent are these focused on other activities rather than passive dissemination?

The key features that have been used so far for the implementation of the mainstreaming principle at the DP level are as follows: inclusion of a strategic partner into vertical mainstreaming; organisation of mainstreaming events; active participation in NTN where DPs in connection with policy makers and potential users have identified requirements for the policy; inclusion of representatives from the research sphere, social partners, in particular employers and trade unions into DP activities; organising exchange programmes between individual DPs, social partners and representatives of important public sectors (horizontal mainstreaming); consultation sessions with professionals that can help to transfer experience into the political context etc. The current version of the National Mainstreaming Strategy CIP EQUAL in terms of DP needs is viewed by most DPs as adequate, but it has come too late. The accessibility of methodology and background materials for mainstreaming with regard to mainstreaming at the programme level is also seen as sufficient but suffering from the same time delay as the strategy. In addition, the concept of innovation has been interpreted in many different ways. Interviews have shown that some partnerships see innovation as any improvement within the actual existence of DPs or even just improvement in the activities of individual DP members, or as improvement of a certain situation within the given region.

Task 2.11: What NTNs have been set up, who is being represented, what is their task and how do they organise their activities? What is the efficiency of NTNs when fulfilling tasks? Which factors have made NTN activities easier, and which ones, on the other hand, have created obstacles?

National Thematic Networks have been created in full accordance with the thematic approach. The networks cover all priority areas, and DPs are permanent NTN members. In the CR six NTNs have

been set up. Once NTN started operating, they were provided with support from the NSS, and they have proved to be a very beneficial platform for sharing information and forming thematic sub-groups enabling joint procedures with regard to, for example, dissemination and mainstreaming. It was important that a pressure was put on individual NTN members (to present results, to comply with deadlines). The structure of NTN operation in terms of DP needs is mostly satisfactory as the level of inclusion of MA and other experts has improved. With this regard it has to be mentioned that the situation differs in individual NTNs. The operation of NTN in terms of being able to influence policy makers or legislation matters is at the support level only, DPs and also MA activities are key in this regard as they should be the patrons mediating and coordinating activities leading to establishing contacts with policy makers. The possibility of DP to learn about the outputs of other DPs within NTNs and sharing experience is seen as one of the biggest contributions of the NTNs as, by putting NTNs into operation, a more intensive cooperation with DPs with a similar focus has been enabled. The rate of a fighting power of each NTN is although influenced also by its thematic definition.

Task 2.12: What mechanisms have been implemented at the programme level for the evaluation and validation of good DP practice?

The following mechanisms have been created to support the implementation of validation in terms of mainstreaming principles – setting up an NTN Coordination Group enabling a strategic approach to supporting mainstreaming at the programme level (vertical mainstreaming), a long-term inclusion of experts into NTN on voluntary basis (even though this approach has proven to be difficult with regard to insufficient motivation of these experts), organising a conference on vertical mainstreaming presenting validated products in order to increase awareness about these activities (a Conference Book), creating a database of good and bad practice – examples of products with typical file formats (problems with good quality background materials). Since the last quarter of 2007 the validation of products created within the CIP EQUAL framework has been under way; the main wave of validation took place in the 1st quarter of 2008. Some DPs had (nearly) no products validated as of March 2008. The validations carried so far have been successful (i.e. the product was validated without any major criticism). The validation should be primarily used to confirm innovation and sustainability of DP results in order not to mainstream any results that might not be sustainable. A system and uniform validation methodology for good practice and innovative products has been adapted within the CIP EQUAL as recommended by the EC and as created in Portugal. The system and methodology may be used for national and regional politics for the development of human resources within the CR.

Task 2.13: What mechanisms have been introduced to disseminate good practice in terms of the employment policy and social integration at the programme level?

DP should be prepared for the fact that vertical mainstreaming is a long-term business and some steps might be done also in periods when they are not supported from the CIP EQUAL means any more. During the implementation of vertical mainstreaming it might be necessary to use both formalised procedures, but also non-formal contacts with politicians and officials. In this regard mechanisms for dissemination of good practice have been employed, i.e. targeted distribution of news, personal contacts and memberships in committees and working groups, organisation of workshops and seminars, participation in fair trades and exhibitions, electronic communication and audio visual materials etc. The final conference of the CIP EQUAL programme – “Innovation Fair for Open Labour Market” can be classed as the most efficient mechanism along with the coordination of

activities of vertical mainstreaming by MA, vertical mainstreaming workshops in March 2008, long/term participation of experts in NTN activities, the third annual CIP EQUAL conference in November 2007 focused on the support of transfer of developed products to their potential users and the commentary of the control CIP EQUAL body on the preparation of a new generation of programmes financed from the ESF during the 2007–2013 period. The MA of CIP EQUAL should have an active role helping DPs with vertical mainstreaming having a reference status not only for the current period of 2008 but also in the period when the DP activities are completed, i.e. in the period when the actual CIP EQUAL ends its activity as well. During the implementation of their tasks, the MA should focus, in particular, on its role of “providing an umbrella” during the coordination of vertical mainstreaming, even though the responsibility for the activities regarding vertical mainstreaming remain with the individual DPs. It is suitable to apply all parts of mainstreaming (both horizontal and vertical) in their combination in order to create a focused pressure both by DPs and the public opinion and other interest groups on the policy makers.

Task 2.14: What is the relevance of dissemination mechanisms with regard to creating an impact on policy makers, and what is their efficiency as shown during the evaluation period?

The main presumption for effective dissemination of results is a well prepared mainstreaming strategy and its regular updating reflecting the development. The DP strategy should be based on strategies of relevant NTNs in compliance with the National Mainstreaming Strategy. At least one expert should be appointed in the DP and NSS who will be responsible for the implementation and regular updating of the strategy. The DP must be consistent when distinguishing between ‘dissemination’ and ‘mainstreaming’. During the dissemination of project results it is advisable to use the most effective forms for the given output, such as personal contacts, two-party or multi-party meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences, designated websites and modern IT. It is also recommended to use well timed articles in the press, or to use TV or radio broadcasting. DPs are well aware of the fact that in order to introduce their innovation products into practice and in order to incorporate them into relevant policies, they need to cooperate with important officials and politicians at local, regional and national levels (depending on the character and potential impact of the innovative product; it is essential for these people to identify with the innovative product and adopt it. In order to do so the product must suit their needs and the development programmes of the relevant municipalities, regions and the state).

Task 2.15: What are the continuous results of the vertical and horizontal mainstreaming at the time of evaluation?

The surveys have shown that DPs and NTNs mostly employ the mainstreaming principle as targeted pressure on politicians and legislation makers using dissemination of good practice examples and publications of their innovation activities in a passive way (press, publication, brochures, handbooks, internet pages etc.) Active methods of influencing these subjects have not been used sufficiently; this in particular refers to actively involving these subjects in problem solving during the project implementation and also to having a direct and personal contact with these subjects. The NTN fulfils mainly a consultancy role within the vertical mainstreaming process (apart from some relatively successful NTNs such as NTN C, E and F). In spring 2008 the MA accepted partial responsibility for the coordination of vertical mainstreaming as an attempt to comply with the general requirement of

vertical mainstreaming, the coordinated approach to communication with potential recipients of vertical mainstreaming. This approach helps DPs to establish contacts with relevant persons, important state officials and policy makers at the national level in particular (Ministry employees, MPs, senators) fulfilling one of the original recommendations of previous CIP EQUAL assessments, i.e. to have a more strategic approach within the mainstreaming process.

4.2 Interpretation of the Concept of Mainstreaming

A questionnaire survey has been carried out to establish how the concept of mainstreaming is interpreted by MA, NSS, MC and DP CIP EQUAL in the Czech Republic using a desk-research method and structured interviews with DP, NSS and MA representatives, many of which are also members of the MC. The questionnaire survey monitors the implementation of mainstreaming based on the distribution of project outputs and information that are further focused on the establishing of systems and organisational measures in order to carry innovative products into the already established structures. The structured interviews and web questionnaires looked at the MA decision regarding the application of the mainstreaming principle, and the relevant administrative and personnel provisions, using examples of DP good practice in national politics, the inclusion of DPs and NTN in this principle, and the method of implementation of horizontal and vertical mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming is one of the most important CIP EQUAL principles as its objective is to enforce newly developed tools in the politics and practice at the local, regional, national and European levels. In order to fulfil this objective it was necessary for the outputs created through the support of individual DPs to be enforceable in politics and practice. Therefore, the compliance with this principle covers also the preparation of CIP EQUAL and the evaluation methods for individual DP proposals and submitted Contracts of National and International cooperation. Consequently, thematic networks have been created at the national and international levels introducing experts from the state administration and private sector to the development of individual results and enabling their adoption within the nationwide or regional programmes.

In terms of the impact of mainstreaming activities on the DP level, there is a difference between horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. Horizontal mainstreaming should lead to changes in the procedures/strategies within partnership organisations. Vertical mainstreaming should lead to changes in national politics in particular and in all relevant procedures/strategies and methods/methodologies. Within the plan for Action 3, DPs should develop such activities that will result in reaching the objectives mentioned above. In terms of defining responsibility for practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle, the mode of mainstreaming based on the NTN and DP activities, in particular, is being employed in the Czech Republic.

The CIP EQUAL settings show that the main responsibility in terms of mainstreaming lies with the MA that must create mechanisms to identify good practice, its origins and create methodology for assessment. Within the CR this methodology is projected in the National Mainstreaming Strategy for the Community Initiative EQUAL, the first version was passed in December 2006 and then updated in June 2007. The description of activities of individual NTN players shows that MA, MC and NSS are responsible for the administrative operation of the NTN. The Czech Republic has given a preference to the organisational model of mainstreaming when the horizontal and vertical mainstreaming is implemented by NTNs

and DPs with the support of MA. This model is in use in the majority of EU countries. With regard to this mainstreaming concept, the responsibility for this concept is divided between the DP, NSS, MA and NTN.

The role and responsibility of individual CIP EQUAL subjects in the CR is defined by the National Mainstreaming Strategy as follows:

CIP EQUAL Control Body in the CR

The MA nominates a NTN chair, and if necessary the MA works with NSS when appointing members to replace the members who step down; the MA also works on mediating contacts with policy makers and experts in given fields, and provides patronage for NTN mainstreaming activities and the distribution of NTN outputs; the MA also provides support to NTN chairs when making contacts with NTN representatives in other countries and mediates an official contact between the European Committee and the CR in terms of mainstreaming.

Monitoring Committee

The CIP EQUAL monitoring committee is a supreme supervision body for the implementation of CIP EQUAL. The monitoring committee approves the mainstreaming strategy, and it receives regular information on the national Mainstreaming Strategy and evaluates the progress reached. Members of the MC CIP EQUAL nominate NTN members (politicians and experts); they participate in NTN meetings and assist in the distribution and enforcement of good practice in politics and practice. In a practice of mainstreaming, there was no significant role of the Monitoring Committee in comparison with another ways of mainstreaming solution.

National Support Structure

The NSS prepares and organises preliminary, ongoing and final conferences within the extent approved by the MA; it provides support to individual NTN whose meetings it helps to organise; it works with individual NTN chairs on the preparation of meetings; it sends out invitations to NTN meetings and conferences; it participates in conferences and meetings related to NTN activities; it prepares minutes of meetings and distributes them, it updates contacts and distributes them; it ensures presentation of documents related to NTNs on the webpage of the Community Initiative EQUAL www.equalcr.cz and administers the internet NTN platform; it keeps a list of NTN members and ensures distribution of materials between these members plus to any other interested subjects; it provides support to NTN chairs when making contacts with NTN representatives in other countries; it provides support to NTN representatives when participating in the European Thematic Networks (ETG), or any other mainstreaming activities at the European level; it assesses the progress of the National Mainstreaming Strategy and based on the assessment it proposes which strategies should be updated, it also makes suggestions to the MA to nominate new NTN members.

Development Partnership

NTN meetings are chaired by NTN chairmen who strive to comply with the main CIP EQUAL principles. The chairmen cooperate with NTN chairmen in other countries in terms of dissemination and mainstreaming, they learn about the DP work and help to spread Good and Best Practices, they are also responsible for the presentation of NTNs at a European wide level and in cooperation with other NTN chairmen they help to work on cross-section topics.

DPs participate in NTN meetings and actively work with the group within the national network or on some other platform; DPs learn about the outputs of other projects and present the outputs of their projects; DPs participate in the creation of a joint mainstreaming strategy and in NTN meetings, and they actively work with the group on the validation, dissemination and mainstreaming (spotting examples of good practice, testing the good practice and applying it to practice or politics), and assist with sharing findings from cross-section topics.

Operation of Mainstreaming in CIP EQUAL within the CR

In Action 3 all DPs are members of the NTNs. There are 6 NTNs altogether and they carry the main burden of implementation of the mainstreaming principle and its implementation in practice. NSS should provide immediate methodology support for DP, but it is the MA that is responsible for the overall mainstreaming strategy at the programme level. As part of the regular quarterly evaluation of the progress of the monitored issue, this role has been adopted by the MA for vertical mainstreaming as the MA coordinates all activities in the final stage of CIP EQUAL towards final recipients of vertical mainstreaming. The functioning of some NTNs as a support tool for mainstreaming has not proven to be always satisfactory. NSS plays an important role here as it is in a better position to solve given issues more efficiently providing these issues are clearly stated in the contractual arrangement with the MA. In consequence, the monitoring indicators show a low participation or inclusion of experts and policy makers in NTN activities (this conclusion has been confirmed by answers to the additional evaluation questions received in structured interviews on the DP level). This has caused a lower quality of NTN outputs.

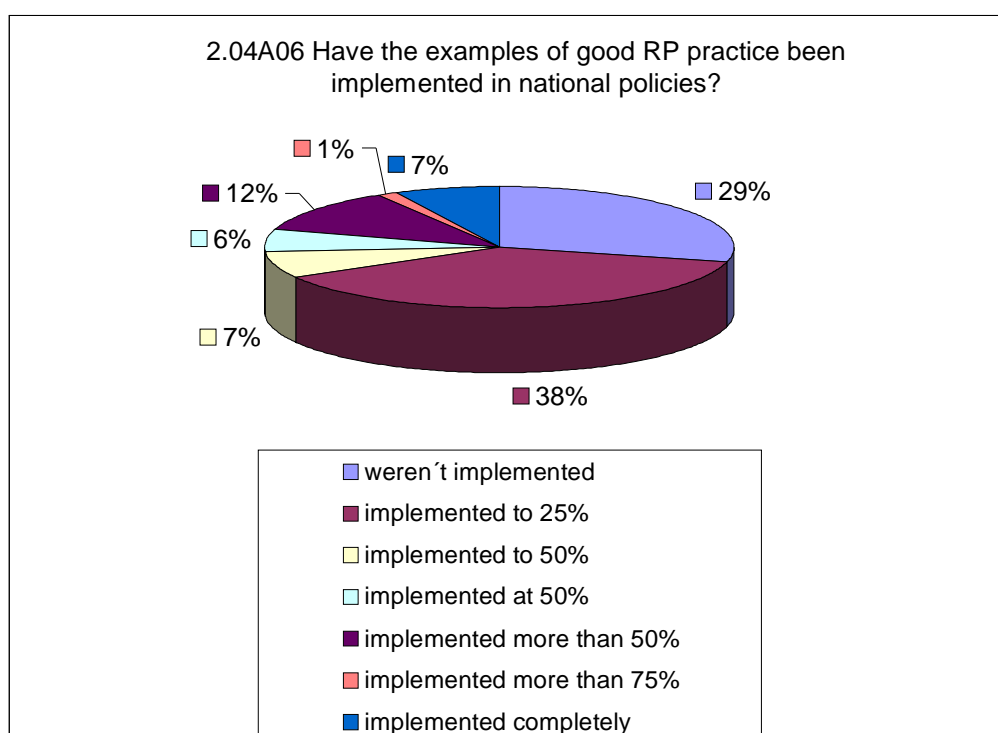
Structured interviews on the DP level show that the application of mainstreaming principles started as a reaction to DP feedback via NTN activities, whilst many procedures and approaches constituted the actual implementation of this principle. The DP evaluates the increased activity of the MA in the last period positively and at the same time it states that MA and NSS compliment each other within the NTN. NSS activities in terms of extending the time periods of projects is also seen as very positive as new mainstreaming events could have been included.

The transfer of information between MA – NSS and DP is an important aspect during the implementation of the mainstreaming principle. The structured interviews at the DP level show that since 2007 this is a problem free area. Some deficiencies were shown at the beginning of the implementation of the principles when there was not enough experience. In one case there was a comment that the transfer of information between MA and NSS should be made faster. In this regard it was confirmed that the single, problematic issues discussed at the MA and NSP levels did not have a negative impact on the mainstreaming activities of individual DPs in 2007 and 2008.

Most respondents at the DP level gave a positive answer to the question if the administrative and personnel provision was sufficient to ensure an optimum course of implementation of mainstreaming. Nevertheless, they criticised the formal status of the MA and the fact that to start with there were no clear methodology instructions. On the other hand, there was help with the implementation of mainstreaming, even though one DP representative reckoned the help came too late. At this level the respondents did not provide unambiguous answers if the personnel provision for NSS and MA was sufficient or not.

The most important stage of implementation of mainstreaming is introducing the examples of DP good practice into the national policies. During the questionnaire survey at the DP level, using a seven point scale, most respondents (38%) responded that the examples of good practice were implemented within the extent of up to 25 %, 29% responded that no examples of good practice were implemented, and only 6 out of 69 respondents answered that the examples were implemented fully or above 75%.

Graph 1: Implementation of good practice in national policies



Source: Surveys

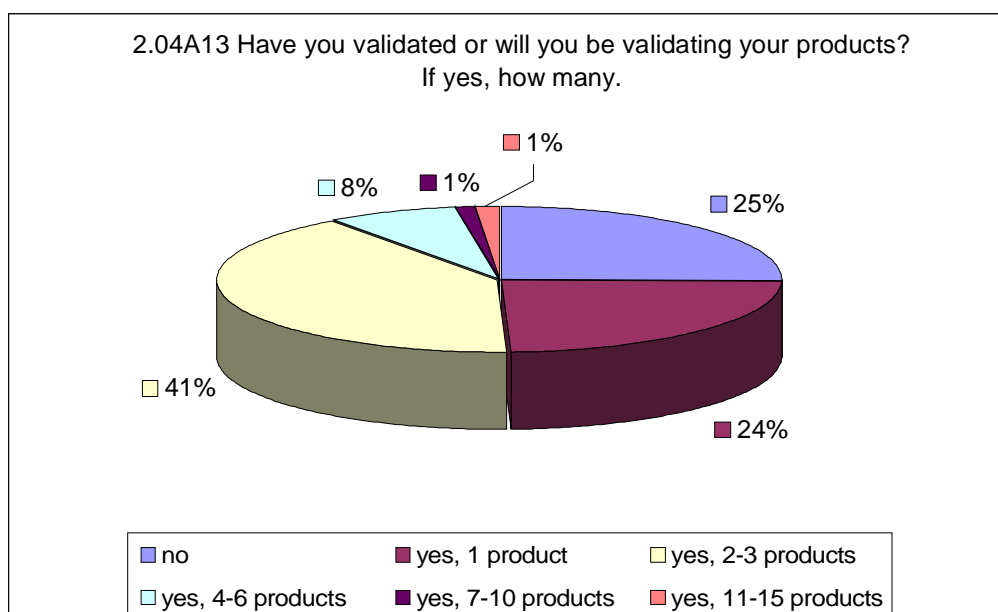
These results monitor the low progress at the beginning of 2008 in the implementation of mainstreaming which is justified by the fact that mainstreaming activities are only now taking place and no results are available as yet. It is assumed that some examples will be implemented. The DP respondents also stated in the structured interviews that they have a mainstreaming strategy ready and they are updating it on a regular basis. In conclusion it can be stated that any evaluation of this issue at the moment might be premature and the issue will have to be evaluated again once the implementation of mainstreaming is completed.

NTNs have been created in order for the DP to meet each other and to meet policy makers and experts in the field, so that experience from the implementation of DP projects could be shared, and project results could be discussed along with the facts on how they could be projected into legislation and practice. DP representatives approached as part of the structured interviews confirmed their active participation in NTN work, and two of the approached acted as NTN chairmen; there are 6 NTNs altogether. Therefore, DP representatives have participated in the preparation of the National Mainstreaming Strategy including its updating. Their active participation in NTN work was shown in their help to

organise various conferences and seminars and participating in these events where the participants learnt about NTN work and its results. Press releases were published, and papers for the annual NTN conference were prepared, along with materials for system designs, and the presentation of products at NTN meetings etc.

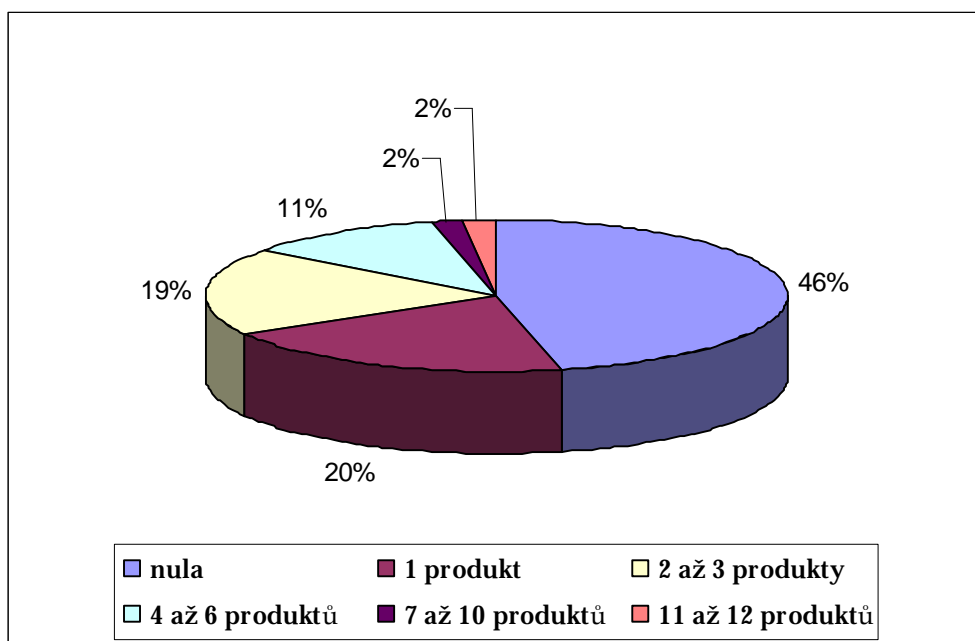
One quarter of the survey respondents at the DP level stated that as of the middle of February 2008 they had no products registered for validation, compared to 75% who did. Most of the respondents registered 2-3 products for validation, for example methodology handbooks and manuals. The structure of the number of certified innovative products/ processes is monitored as part of the 2.3.04.00.A indicator and the graph below shows data as of June 2008 according to IS MSSF Monit. The graphs show the shift in proportion of individual data, as DPs projected validation of at least 2-3 products, towards the category *no products so far*. Other intervals are comparable if we take into account minor variances of the monitored set within the survey compared to the overall CIP EQUAL data. The assessment of the question regarding the number of products registered for validation will have to be evaluated once the implementation of mainstreaming is completed.

Graph 2: Number of validated products projected by DP in the survey



Source: IREAS survey (February 2008)

Graph 3: Number of certified innovative products/processes according to IS MSSF MONIT data, June 2008



Source: IS MSSF Monit data, statistical software outputs

In the structured interviews most DPs answered that although they had direct contact with policy makers (in particular MPs, senators, members of associations and ministries - MoEYS, MoLSA, regional authorities, magistrates, local and communal authorities – mayors) who can mediate the transfer into politics and actual practice, nevertheless they state that for the actual enforcement of results of individual DPs into practice, long-term and targeted lobbying is essential. In this regard, there has been a lot of success at the local and regional levels using training programmes for competence trainers who consequently work with the individual products and target groups, for example via the Association of Private Schools of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and the National Institute for Professional Education. During 2007 and 2008 the most intensive contacts were made at the local level, in particular with regard to participation in seminars and implementing the DP results using the DP methodical, technical and intermediary tasks. The policy makers accept passive patronage over round tables (MPs), whilst the MC accepts the methodology patronage of DP activities. The SSZ representatives provide patronage for Job Centres in the CR and support projects by initiating changes within the MoLSA based on their experience from the field. In the first half of 2008 the MA activities, leading to an overall coordination of targeting the outcomes of individual DPs (according to NTN) directly at the recipients of vertical mainstreaming, became very important for contacting policy makers at the national level.

4.2.1 Main Recommendations

Based on the questionnaire survey that has been carried out using desk-research, a web questionnaire and structured interviews, the assessment team suggests the following recommendation:

- The MA of CIP EQUAL should draft framework agreements with other MA operational programmes financed from the ESF in the programme period 2007–2013 with regard to the possibility of other publicity regarding the mainstreaming principle of the innovative products validated so far, in particular at all policy levels.
- The issue of implementation of examples of good DP practice into national policies, including the number of registered products for validation, can be evaluated once the implementation of mainstreaming is completed.

4.3 Activities Used to Support Mainstreaming Mechanisms

Previous evaluation reports stated that the practical application of the mainstreaming principle is likely to be quite difficult for DPs even though DPs do not generally mention any problems with the implementation of CIP EQUAL principles (see also EURO SERVICE GROUP, 2006, p. 75). During the survey carried out from January to March 2008, the facts regarding, for example, a low level of inclusion of target groups in the DP preparation stage and activities within a relevant project or DPs paying not much attention to the implementation of the substance of the mainstreaming principle (i.e. testing, validation and mainstreaming of innovative features) were not confirmed. DP representatives put much emphasis on these issues during 2007 and 2008 as shown by the structured interviews at NSS and DP levels and the outcomes of the web questionnaire.

The description of mechanisms on individual MA, NSS, MC and DP levels is stated below. The difficulties with the implementation of mainstreaming do not lie in the mechanisms used, but in the environment setting where the mechanisms are used. Therefore even the context of evaluation of these evaluation tasks puts more emphasis on the systematics and the related necessity to carry out single steps to support mainstreaming, and not on the measures based on the actual need or the need to come up with an ad hoc solution.

Nowadays, it is the vertical mainstreaming that is getting the most attention. The conditions for the actual start of coordinated vertical mainstreaming of validated outputs via the MA has been prepared since the 3rd quarter of 2007 when the MA prepared a uniform form with information on the DP outputs for VM (including, apart from others, the identification of suitable recipients and reasoning). This form was completed by all DPs and finalised based on the comments provided by the MA and (paid) long-term NTN experts. In March and April 2008 validated products were completed and prepared for their recipients within the vertical mainstreaming process. The support mechanisms for the objectives of vertical mainstreaming for created products or ‘intermediate’ CIP EQUAL products were complicated by some issues mentioned below. Overall, vertical mainstreaming had been restricted until then mainly by the fact that the essential last phase, i.e. the actual development of these products, had not been completed; some of them were completed during the spring months of 2008.

In terms of defining responsibility for practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle, there are two strands of responsibility, i.e. responsibility at the programme level (MA and NSS) and at the project level (DP and NTN). In the Czech Republic it is the mainstreaming model based on NTN activities supported by the MA that has been

employed in particular. In the first half of 2008 the role of individual NTN was more or less pushed into the background as part of support provision to vertical mainstreaming.

It is possible to define two issues in the environment setting for the implementation of the principle of mainstreaming:

- The relationship between the MA and NSS: NSS activities are not clearly defined within the context of implementation of mainstreaming

A detailed analytical evaluation of this issue is stated in the Chapter Current Conditions and Course of Actions 2 and 3, more specifically in *“The Role of NSS in the Enforcement of Mainstreaming”*.

- The relationship between the DP and NTN: The operation of NTNs mainly as platforms for sharing DP experience with the implementation of the CIP EQUAL programme that supports, in particular, horizontal mainstreaming

The partial analysis of the minutes of individual NTN meetings show that NTNs have been used by DPs to share their experience (horizontal mainstreaming), and only in some cases they have also been used for vertical mainstreaming. The issue of active inclusion of external experts has been moved into the horizontal mainstreaming sphere by some NTNs (for example NTN D, NTN A, NTN B). Although vertical mainstreaming has been supported by relevant strategies, proposals for changes in legislation and methods of approaching politicians (for example at the international conference on the EQUAL programme, at round tables, by preparing the validation process for vertical mainstreaming etc), the key activities of this process have been implemented by better coordination practice on the part of the MA in the first half of 2008.

Mechanisms Created by the MA

As mentioned above the MA is responsible for vertical mainstreaming at the programme level. The responsibility must be viewed in a wider context of the actual CIP EQUAL environment where the programme started to be implemented. Considering the relatively little experience the CR had with these types of programmes, the possibility of linking up these types of programmes to similar activities in the CR was quite minimal. In this regard the role of MA has been vital for further enforcement of validated products at the national level. The current MA activities have been directed at the relevant experience from other EU countries, and MA staff tried to implement recommendations from regular CIP EQUAL assessments. Generally, we can refer to the following mechanisms on the MA level:

- Using experience from abroad with the validation of innovative products – MA staff have used the methodology for validating innovative products from Portugal. The MA accepted to adopt the Portuguese experience and organised a study trip to Portugal. NSS has prepared methodology background materials, procedures and a seminar followed by a workshop along with presentations on validation of good practice. The adopted methodology must have been partially modified for CIP EQUAL conditions in the CR, as in Portugal Action 2 was announced first, and then

Action 3. In the CR Actions 2 and 3 were announced at the same time (additional calls for Action 3 were implemented during 2007).

- Experiences from abroad with the implementation of CIP EQUAL – MA representatives regularly attend meetings with representatives from other EU countries involved in the implementation of CIP EQUAL in order to gain more experience with the implementation process.
- NTN⁶³ Coordination Group – this Group characterises a strategic approach to the support of mainstreaming at the programming/national level (vertical mainstreaming) with regard to the coordination of vertical mainstreaming in the completion phase for validated products. During the validation the MA has been supporting vertical mainstreaming (contacting relevant representatives of state administration, holding patronage over the meetings etc), for the validated products in particular.
- Long-term cooperation with NTN⁶⁴ experts – The MA initiated a response to the identified issue regarding the insufficient number of experts. A proposal was put together for each NTN to have its own paid experts. This proposal was submitted at the beginning of 2007, nevertheless NSS did not recommend this idea in fear that other unpaid NTN members might criticise this approach. The MA therefore hired paid experts who regularly evaluate the procedures of the NTN mainstreaming strategy for a remuneration and who participate in the final NTN conferences where professional discussions are held in workshops for individual networks.
- Conference – e.g. “The Annual CIP EQUAL Conference” held in November 2007 focused on, apart from others, the evaluation and presentation of the first regular NTN outputs. Workshops focused on cross-section topics were organised as part of the conference. In addition, a conference on vertical mainstreaming presenting validated products was held. The aim of this event was to raise awareness about these activities through the Conference Book.
- Good and Bad Practice Database – examples of products and their characteristics, relevant volumes etc. Employees of the MA of CIP EQUAL, and NSS staff should contribute to this database by supplying data in adequate professional quality.

⁶³ *The coordination of mainstreaming activities will be based on regular meetings of the NTN chairs (at least twice a year), MA representatives involved in mainstreaming, NSS representatives and other relevant persons. These meetings should prevent any duplicity in the mainstreaming activities, in particular in terms of approaching politicians with regard to vertical mainstreaming. These meetings will also assist the communication between individual NTNs* [MoLSA (2007e), p. 6].

⁶⁴ *The inclusion of paid experts by the NTN was accepted very positively and in the meetings the main area, the expert should work on, was defined. This is the area of evaluation and validation of innovations and good practice as the paid experts should be professionals in the given area (based on the thematic focus of individual NTNs), and they should be active in the assessment and validation processes, and not only in the coordination of matters. The second area identified for the inclusion of paid expert into NTN was the area of compiling databases of contacts relevant for a specific area with regard to the RP outputs that should be mainstreamed.* [MoLSA (2007e), p. 6]

Mechanisms Created by NSS

In terms of CIP EQUAL implementation, NSS is responsible for the operation of NTN and providing background data for mainstreaming from the DP level for the needs of the MA. The last Report on Implementation of the National Mainstreaming Strategy for July – September 2007 shows that ***all National Thematic Networks (NTN) are in active operation and the projected time schedule for the determined NTN activities according to the National Mainstreaming Strategy is essentially being complied with*** (MoLSA 2007g, p. 3). With regard to a gradual creation of individual versions of mainstreaming strategies for each NTN, the responsibilities of individual NTN members and activity planning were clarified. Just like the National Mainstreaming Strategy, also the strategies of individual NTNs are seen as live documents that require regular updating. In general, we can refer to the following mechanisms at the NSS level:

- Regular updating of the National Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Reports – this basic methodology document at the national/programme level for the implementation of the mainstreaming principle in the CR was adopted at the end of 2006 and it was once updated during the course of 2007; 3 reports on the implementation of the strategy were written (March 2007, June 2007 and September 2007).
- DP representatives have a ‘help-line’ available – this is a suitable way of assisting the ongoing solution of problems within the implementation of CIP EQUAL on the DP level. Recipients use the NSS help-line to have their queries answered. The recipients can also use consultations over e-mail, or arrange a personal meeting with a member of the NSS.
- Methodology support to DP during the implementation of mainstreaming - the methodology support to DP during the implementation of mainstreaming started to be provided at the time when DP representatives did not quite understand the principle of mainstreaming and the context of implementation within the entire CIP EQUAL programme. Therefore, two methodology handbooks (for mainstreaming and innovation) were prepared to enable an easier understanding of the issue using practical examples. The handbooks were followed by informative seminars (2 seminars on validations, a seminar on publicity and principles etc) in order to provide further explanations of this principle within the NTNs. NSS activities respected the fact that specific DP outputs for mainstreaming are implemented by DPs in their own way.
- Coordination of NTN activities
 - At the time of foundation of individual NTNs a workshop was held to explain the principle idea and mission of NTN activities. DP representatives and representatives of public administration and others were invited to attend this workshop. The system of motivational evaluation of external experts (NTN members) can be evaluated as insufficient as the different level of their active involvement has decreased the efficiency of mainstreaming activities.
 - Activities, connected with the potential mainstreaming of the CIP EQUAL project, managed to be coordinated within the NTN as within each NTN key institutions and authorities at the national level were identified for

coordinated mainstreaming. This joint progress was used as a foundation for the MA to coordinate vertical mainstreaming in cases where similar products are not presented separately.

- In terms of coordinating NTN operation, NSS focuses on the communication with the DP within the individual NTNs and the NSS organises NTN meetings, takes minutes, writes reports, and acts as an intermediary for individual NTNs via its representatives who attend NTN meetings, provide methodology support and overall coordination of relevant activities.
- In view of different themes, the size of the networks and other formal and informal differences between individual NTNs, it is advisable in the future to respect these differences within the mainstreaming activities further by using various supporting mechanisms to modify activities based on the focus of a particular NTN. As stated in some of the reports on the implementation of the principle of mainstreaming,⁶⁵ each of the networks has developed in a different way depending on the number of factors stated above.

Mechanisms Created by the MC

The Monitoring Committee closely worked with MA representatives in 2007. In particular, the main steps for successful implementation of the principle of mainstreaming were approved, when for example the National Mainstreaming Strategy, Version 1.2 was approved by the CIP EQUAL Monitoring Committee on 12.6.2007. The following areas, in particular, were updated:⁶⁶

- Inclusion of paid experts in NTN activities;
- Coordination of mainstreaming activities of individual NTN;
- Possibility of financing NTN activities;
- Evaluation and validation of innovation and good practice.

In the first quarter of 2008 a proposal for further updating of the National Mainstreaming Strategy was prepared. The proposal focuses on the long-term involvement of experts in NTN activities, updating the time schedule for 2008 activities, and the inclusion of experts from Job Centres into NTN activities, and the coordination of vertical mainstreaming by the MA. Even though it is only a proposal, some of these activities were already implemented in the first half of 2008.

Mechanisms Created by the DP

As stated in the introduction to this Chapter, the DP plays a key role in the process of mainstreaming in nearly all phases of Action 3 when the DP is responsible for the implementation of all activities related to relevant dissemination and mainstreaming. In 2007 the methodology support for the DP was strengthened by outlining and preparation of

⁶⁵ E.g. MOLSA (2007e), p. 3

⁶⁶ see MOLSA (2007g), p. 5

mainstreaming activities and publishing or presenting methodology handbooks⁶⁷ and organising various seminars.⁶⁸ Specific mechanisms used by DP are regularly described in technical reports of the project. The mechanisms used depend on the characters and focus of the project activities as sometimes the given DP focuses only on a single target group (employers) without the need for wider changes in the entire system. Generally, both horizontal and vertical mainstreaming processes are applied in individual DPs at various levels. For the most complicated mainstreaming, contacts with regional and national representatives and special products for potential cooperation with various institutions (such as “Business Atlas” using a GIS both for MMR and town representatives etc) are used.

For vertical mainstreaming the following barriers can be defined as seen from the beginning of the second half of 2006 till the present (i.e. the first half of 2008):

- DP representatives have more problems communicating with people from the decision making sphere at the national level (e.g. ministries, government) than at the regional level (regions, towns etc). This barrier is difficult for DP representatives, nevertheless it must be stated that for key vertical mainstreaming that should be coordinated by the MA, no special communication in its 1. phase (linking contacts and forwarding results) between DP and the people from the decision making sphere is expected. On the other hand, in order to prevent duplicity during the mainstreaming of validated CIP EQUAL products the transfer of DP information and outputs is done in this phase via the MA.
- Unclear political situations at the national level or competition with other topical political issues that are of higher importance (usually short term importance) – there have been several political contexts that have lowered the national, regional and local efficiency of mainstreaming activities of long-term character. These were, in particular, the following periods:
 - Before the elections and after the elections to the House of Commons of the CR Parliament in 2006;
 - The following 6 months period of uncertainty before a stable CR Government was appointed (and the related division of political powers in key resorts) till the beginning of 2007;
 - In 2007 and partially in 2008 major attention was paid to the preparation of reform steps of the CR Government to improve the situation of public finances;
 - The end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 – political concentration on the CR presidential elections;
 - In 2008 – preparation of CR for its position of the Chair of the EU Council during the first half of 2009.

⁶⁷ e.g. “How to Enforce Changes – Practical Guide to Mainstreaming” , translation of a European Commission Document

⁶⁸ E.g. a seminar in March 2007– “*Self-evaluation of projects within the CIP EQUAL*”, 2 seminars in May 2007 – “*Presentation of the System of Validation of Good Practice and Methodology for Validation of Innovative Products*” and “*Gender Mainstreaming*”

These aspects have had a negative impact on the potential power of CIP EQUAL at the national level (political cycle/ process). This has affected the situation not only after the elections, but also before the elections as the officials and politicians did not know what the next political development will be. In fact six months before the elections in 2006, key actors at the national level avoided taking any major steps. Due to the elections and the unclear situation, the continuity in decision making was interrupted and the institutional memory of authorities was affected. Nowadays, the attention of individual resorts is focused on the coming chairmanship of the CR in the EU Council. Based on the experience of Great Britain, it is possible to use basic premises of recommendations for the outline of long-term and coordinated lobbying, including an active inclusion of external experts with a real potential to enforce the CIP EQUAL results in practice from the very beginning, in order to decrease (not remove – that is impossible) the weight of the impact of political fluctuation on the outputs of similar type programmes as CIP EQUAL.

As shown by the web questionnaire, nearly all DP use available mechanisms to support mainstreaming (specific proportions are stated further below). The respondents evaluated not only the use of mechanisms, but also the level of their efficiency. The following categories of mechanisms were evaluated:

- Inclusion of a strategic partner in vertical mainstreaming (i.e. organisations that have the experience and contact to ensure vertical mainstreaming);
- Organising mainstreaming events (such as conferences, workshops, seminars);
- Active participation in the NTN, connections with policy makers and potential policy users;
- Inclusion of representatives of the academic and research sphere, social partners, in particular employers' representatives and trade union representatives (that are missing in NTN) into our DP activities;
- Organising exchanges between individual DPs, social partners and representatives of important public departments (horizontal mainstreaming);
- Consultation with specialists that can help to transfer experience into the political context;
- Regular inclusion of the target group into DP activities and provision of information to the target group.

The assessment team regards the system of inclusion of external experts in some NTNs as problematic at the present time with regard to the support of implementation of mainstreaming. The reports on the implementation of national mainstreaming strategy shows (MoLSA 2007e, p. 3, MoLSA 2007g, p. 3) that DPs view the inclusion of experts into the network as a great contribution to their projects, in particular in view of establishing new contacts and cooperation with other DPs within the EQUAL project with regard to joint mainstreaming activities, gaining inspiration, knowledge and information that can be used by DPs and it can be used for updating the mainstreaming activities of individual DPs, and gaining expert contacts (only in some NTN where nominated experts play an active part). The operation of the system that includes external experts into NTN activities can be viewed also with the second side where as innovation bearer lies with the DP. If such activity (further cooperation with experts) is not developed continually and in a targeted manner

within the NTN (or developed only formally, in a restricted manner or it is not coordinated at all), the system becomes less functional. Considering the fact that experts and policy makers are key persons for NTN work, NTN operates in a “magic circle” which results in lower activity during implementation or when defining common goals. This makes the circle even more complicated as DPs participating in such NTNs start to implement mainstreaming activities following their own line of work and stop relying on the weak support of the NTNs. DPs are weak in their activities in their relation to NTN and do not support given NTNs in any significant manner. This is a problem for larger NTNs that have more varied themes with less thematic definition (and in majority, but not always, larger ones). On the other hand, smaller and thematically defined NTNs have an easier role in the fact that they are clearer and more transparent for the invited experts (they have more narrow specified common aims and strategies), plus working with a smaller number of members is less time consuming.

It is necessary to mention, that according to a less power of specific activities on the side of thematic less defined NTN, is related to activities of NTN as a whole, that are activities, which are delivered by NTN (e.g. organizing of common meetings, mainstreaming activities). In any case, this means, that this less active NTN is also less active in activities on the level of DPs. As it was mentioned above, these are only two different and full-value mainstreaming models, when sometimes is more stressed common DPs features (and here is maybe bigger common activity on the level of whole NTS) and also, it is more emphasised issues which are more unique for DPs (and here are more logic bigger activity on the level of each DPs, because of their specific thematic focusion, that possibilities of cooperation with another DPs and also possibilities of active utilising of NTN is very limited).

The issue of final roles for the external experts in vertical mainstreaming has changed during the first half of 2008. More details are provided in the following Chapter.

The creation of 4 criteria method to understand innovation in NTN D (life-time learning) can be regarded as a very interesting supporting mechanism for mainstreaming. In NTN D a 4 criteria method of how to evaluate innovation was prepared – what it is, how to define it etc, especially with regard to the fact that if only a small, single improvement is in question, or if it is a really complex ‘innovation’? Based on this method, specific types of products were identified. The main success was the creation of common methodology and the follow up selection of innovative products.

The outcomes of the survey carried out with DP representatives are stated in Appendix no. 14 where the main point regarding the mechanisms, created to support mainstreaming at the DP level, are summed up. Overall, the use of existing mechanisms to support mainstreaming can be evaluated as sufficient. Issues with the implementation of mainstreaming must be searched for in the wider context of setting up the existing procedures within CIP EQUAL.

Main Recommendations for Mainstreaming Mechanisms

Based on the questionnaire survey using desk-research, a web questionnaire and structured interviews, the assessment team suggests the following recommendations directed more at system changes within mainstreaming than at changes to the specific mechanisms used:

- The programmes financed from the ESF should have a well prepared system of selected mainstreaming mechanisms from the very beginning so that, just like in Great Britain, the right conditions are created for outlining long-term and coordinated lobbying, including active inclusion of external experts with real possibilities to enforce the results of CIP EQUAL in practice in order to decrease (not to remove – that is not viable) the impact of the weight of political fluctuation on the outputs of similar type programmes as CIP EQUAL.
- Much more emphasis should be placed on professional NTN organisations that will not only act as a platform to exchange DP experience within the implementation of programmes financed from the ESF during 2007–2013: the aspects of vertical mainstreaming could be limited according to their thematic definition for some NTNs as a whole (not for each DPs member) with regard to their size if it affects the level of inclusion of suitable external experts and their professional guarantee in individual thematic areas. Issues connected with a low level of active inclusion of external experts shifts the operation of NTN into the sphere of horizontal mainstreaming and vertical mainstreaming is further sorted out especially by activities of DPs.

In the case of employing a professional guarantor for the given NTN, the necessary conditions for the support and correct coordination of other innovative activities would be created.

4.4 Support Mechanisms for DP Developed during the Implementation of their Horizontal and Vertical Mainstreaming Activities

4.4.1 Context of the Progress and Development so far

With regard to the above stated, the assessment team focused within the web questionnaire on questions regarding the access to the implementation of the mainstreaming concept and the typology of the access available. This sub-activity was analysed using the current available mechanisms for supporting mainstreaming (see previous Chapter).

From a pragmatic point of view, it is possible to consider the timing of additional calls for Action 3 in the last implementation phase of CIP EQUAL as adequate (except for Call 5 – see later text), as the structured interviews showed that during Action 1 and partially even during Actions 2 and 3, the representatives of individual DP gradually became aware of the steps necessary for dissemination and mainstreaming. After a certain period of time DPs managed to be quite successful and obtained positive results. DPs also found out that a relatively complex partnership with many partners can work, and therefore it was possible to continue in the existing activities both in a formal and objective manner. Many of the DP projects should have ended in October 2007, nevertheless thanks to the additional calls for Action 3 it was possible to extend the project activities further and to implement other activities and to further the national and international process of mainstreaming. The main problem proved to be the timing of Call 5 and the negative impact of external aspects of CIP EQUAL (premature non-approval of co-financing from the state budget of the CR and the fluctuation of the exchange rate).

The analysis of documentation regarding the support for DP during the implementation of their horizontal and vertical mainstreaming strategies prepared at the programme level identified the support mechanisms on the part of MA and NSS. These identified mechanisms were further investigated with regard to their efficiency and potential use within the DP mainstreaming strategies.

At the beginning of 2007 MA marked out the following sets of activities to support mainstreaming mechanisms in the CR.⁶⁹ Each of the sets is presented along with the evaluation of its efficiency, its actual use and links between the identified mechanism and the quality of mainstreaming DP strategies.⁷⁰

Support through methodology management and active participation of the MA in the mainstreaming at the programme level

Representatives of individual DP evaluated the increased activity of MA very positively, in particular with regard to vertical mainstreaming as this step enabled certain coordination of 'opening doors' to the policy makers at the national level. Compared to activities of 2008 and 2007 there was an increased attention paid by the MA to the methodology management of DPs.

Improved evaluation of the quality of technical monitoring reports by NSS (in particular in the area of principles and self-evaluation)

The depth structured interviews proved that in 2007 and 2008 NSS paid more attention to the control of compliance with principles, and to self-assessing and monitoring indicators in the technical monitoring reports. Nevertheless, the controls sometimes put more emphasis on the compliance with principles than on compliance with the stipulated objectives of the given project which generally leads more to the coordination of outputs, outcomes and impacts of individual projects within CIP EQUAL. This is to a certain extent logical as CIP EQUAL is its final implementation stage when it is possible to monitor and evaluate the first tangible results.

Improving the support provided by NTN (in particular with regard to synergic effects between individual networks and subjects)

NTNs improved the support provided through, in particular, increasing the number of NTN meetings in 2007 that were attended by the MA and NSS representatives, and by interlinking individual NTNs through holding conferences. The improved support was not visible in all NTNs across the whole section, but only in some of them (e.g. NTN C, E and F). In other NTNs this support was not very efficient and it did not improve the quality of DP mainstreaming strategies. The various level of inclusion of external experts in the NTN activities also showed as quite problematic, in particular in terms of key NTNs with significant competencies to enforce DP results in practice.

⁶⁹ Kučera, F. (2007)

⁷⁰ This evaluation was made based on depth structured interviews that took place in May 2008 and the panel of experts on mainstreaming that took place on 25. 6. 2008.

The change in the way NSS understands 'spot checks', i.e. emphasising the role of the controller as a potential consultant and advisor for DP

DP representatives have always viewed the issue of 'spot checks' very positively with PWC acting as NSS as they have appreciated the active and open client approach of professional consultants wanting to solve problems. In this regard there were no major changes in the approach in 2007 which has been very positively viewed for a long time. A partial recommendation suggested that NSS should implement more checks of "material nature" for similar programmes financed from the ESF in 2007 – 2013 and appointing an expert in the given field (e.g. nominated by NTN) which would significantly assist the material fulfilment of the main CIP EQUAL objectives at the project level.

Preparation of methodology handbooks and directives for DP

During the second half of 2006 and in 2007 MA and NSS showed an increased activity preparing methodology booklets and directives for DP; this activity was partly in response to recommendations from previous assessments. During the questionnaire survey DP representatives marked this mechanism as a relatively low efficient mechanism to support their mainstreaming activities (see Appendix 16). Nevertheless, the depth structured interviews showed some aspects that might decrease the efficiency of this mechanism. The methodology handbooks should have been published earlier for a higher effect. In addition, the methodology handbooks and directives were often unnecessarily large in volume lacking clarity, brevity and not being to the point. Many DP representatives did not use this mechanism in their work, mainly due to the implementation of regular changes in the implementation of CIP EQUAL. Therefore they relied more on one to one consultations with NSS representatives with regard to individual projects and the preparation of technical monitoring reports. Despite all this the methodology management of final recipients is a very important tool. Two interlinked steps might be recommended for similar programmes financed from the ESF in 2007 – 2013:

- Based on the experience from the first programme period 2004–2006 and the context of new conditions for the implementation of programmes financed from the ESF in 2007–2013, an analysis and summary of difficult issues should be done to ensure relevant methodology coverage of these issues (e.g. using handbooks, possible solutions);
- In view of the above, more emphasis should be put on brevity when supplying methodology materials (e.g. a summary of 10 points what to do or not to do on the website for the given programmes showing specific examples and reference to relevant methodology documents that are more extensive).

Application of CIP EQUAL experience in the programme period 2007–2013 within OP LZZ (national/programme level of mainstreaming)

This mechanism is evidently in use in the programme period 2007–2013; the procedures are being simplified and the examples of good and bad practice from the first shortened period of 2004–2006 are used. In this regard, this is a very good quality tool that supports and moves along the implementation environment of programmes financed from the ESF (for example the form of the BENEFIT7+ tool has been simplified). DP representatives said mostly yes to the continuation of CIP EQUAL activities in the programme period 2007–2013, in particular OP LZZ, OP VK and OP Praha Adaptabilita. It is possible to state that within

the programmes implemented in all regions of the CR (apart from the Capital City of Prague), results implemented within CIP EQUAL will be multiplied.

Complex integration of innovative DP products with the aim to apply them to the employment policy in the CR

It is not easy to assess this mechanism; in particular because the support of the MA and NSS that was focused on the complex integration of innovative products with the aim to apply them to the employment policy in the CR was significant in 2007 and 2008, nevertheless the efficiency was monitored within CIP EQUAL in particular. There was no wider application to the employment policy within the CR, although this should not be viewed as a difficulty as these aspects are connected with long-term effects of CIP EQUAL on the whole which exceeds the framework of assessment of this partial point. Nevertheless, there are exceptions in the DPs and some of the innovative products are currently used at the regional or local level of public administration. Some products even made it commercially and they were bought by private subjects.

Emphasis on the regional operational dimension of the NTNs (the MA supports efforts made by the DP and NTN to establish regional networks according to the seat of residence of individual DPs)

The regional operational dimension of NTN has never been greatly emphasised and is not even expected by DPs. DP representatives have preferred using contacts and personal meetings for horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. In terms of applying results at the regional or local levels, these activities were implemented by DPs using their own line of work and their partners, and not really taking advantage of the NTN environment for this purpose very much.

The following support mechanisms provided by NSS could be defined (the assessment of the first 3 mechanisms is carried out in the sets of activities stated above with regard to support of mainstreaming mechanisms in the CR):

- advisory activities during spot checks;
- preparation of methodology handbooks as a basis for the MA to comment;
- organisation of NTN meetings;
- telephone help-line.

This tool was generally assessed as a very efficient and supporting tool to deal with partial problems. The efficiency of this 'general' telephone information helpline will be increased in the future by so-called consultation sessions provided by selected experts specialising in the actual issue of implementation of programmes financed from the ESF. The representatives of DP/final recipients would have an opportunity to ask about specific problems over the phone. This facility would be available only on certain days during the working week (depending on how busy the given specialist is), as apart from this telephone line there would be a "general" telephone help-line that is sometimes not very flexible in providing answers to specific questions. Generally speaking, this mechanism is regarded as very efficient and supportive for DP activities.

The issue of mutual synergy between the provision of methodology handbooks and the follow up personal consultations was also discussed in structured interviews. In this regard

it is possible to state that personal consultations provide much better support than methodology handbooks. These are complementary methods of DP management for horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. Essentially, the following complementary chronology applies: (1) methodology materials are published and they are followed up with (2) personal consultations with individual DPs. The efficiency of only one of these activities cannot be evaluated even though in terms of the final effect the personal consultations seem to be a more efficient form of support. DP representatives must learn about the relevant issues first and then they can provide relevant consultations. In addition, DP representatives come with their own problems which are then discussed at the NSS level. DPs view it very positively that their ideas are being worked with and included in the implementation of CIP EQUAL.

In 2008 it will be vital and essential to provide methodology help to DPs with the presentation of the created and validated products. NSS has been providing access templates with regard to this issue at various meetings; nevertheless DP representatives must be continuously reminded that the perception of individual products in CIP EQUAL by policy makers can be very different to the perception of the actual DPs. In this regard there are two key activities that can be assessed very positively in 2008 as they have provided support to DPs during their vertical mainstreaming, namely [see also MoLSA (2008,1), pages 1 and 7]: “The Innovation Fair for Open Labour Market”, held in April 2008. The main mission of the fair was to provide a scope for the outcomes of the projects supported by CIP EQUAL and to present these outcomes at workshops and exhibitions. The other key activity was the workshop held in March 2008 when the participants had an opportunity to try the preparation of strategies and plan for dealing with policy makers.

Overall, DP representatives saw significant differences in the approach of the MA and NSS between Action 1, 2, and 3 compared to Action 3 only. The extent of information and support has improved significantly over that time. At the start the programme activities were presented only on the CIP EQUAL webpage which the DP representatives deemed as completely inadequate.

Generally speaking, DP representatives complain about the timing of the mainstreaming support that should have come earlier and it should have been more qualified.⁷¹ For many institutions involved in the DP, vertical mainstreaming represents a new aspect they have to learn. The DP does not always clearly understand the need of implementing certain types of activities – in this case it was the validation of products and methods of influencing policy makers. Nowadays, new possibilities/ enforcing mechanisms have been created to enforce the project products using contacts with relevant bodies of public administration with the use of the MA. NTN and DPs focus more on working with relevant officials and institutions that can help with vertical mainstreaming (Government Council, professional departments etc) rather than focusing on contacting politicians at the national level.⁷²

Appendix 16 summarises all the main outcomes of the questionnaire survey regarding the issue of perception of the DP support during mainstreaming activities. Generally, it is evident that the majority of respondents view the current methodology support provided by

⁷¹ The issues of timing and using methodology and support have been important topics reappearing in the CIP EQUAL from the very beginning. This results in a certain time delay with regard to the implementation of specific RP activities.

⁷² This shift is visible in particular during discussions and the preparation of materials for mainstreaming by individual NTNs.

the MA and NSS as very positive and efficient (34 % was very efficient and 53 % as efficient). The assessment of NTN operation as the intermediary for contacting policy makers seems relatively unbalanced when although 2/3 of the respondents assessed NTNs positively, 1/3 answered that NTNs represent inefficient support for mediating contacts with persons from the decision making sphere.

Experience with the mechanisms for supporting mainstreaming in Great Britain⁷³

Individual DP were supported in their horizontal and vertical mainstreaming mechanisms in Great Britain using the following mechanisms::

- supporting the operation and participation in NTNs;
- MA representatives attending regular and ad hoc meetings;
- Written handbooks, methodologies and guides to good practice;
- Individual monitoring visits (not comparable with the Czech *spot checks!*);
- DPs have been supported when looking for professional consultancy and mutual cooperation in terms of themes and geography in order to strengthen the application of innovative products on the labour market and making them available for vertical mainstreaming.

Assessment of usability and efficiency of these mechanisms: the main positive feature of the mechanisms used was, in particular, the early inclusion of policy makers in the NTN and the whole CIP EQUAL process in Great Britain. Also the well timed preparation of methodology handbooks and instructions for DP was assessed very positively. The main risks should be seen in the political and electoral cycle and their links to the implementation of CIP EQUAL in its implementation phase (in particular Action 3). The main task of MA is to identify and include NTN members and policy makers into CIP EQUAL overall strategies, events and publications.

4.5 Development of Conditions for the Implementation of the Mainstreaming Strategy

The MA, partially cooperating with NSS, is responsible for the implementation of mainstreaming activities at the national level. The main document for the national level is the National Mainstreaming Strategy for the EQUAL Community Initiative for the Czech Republic. With regard to the state of events, the weakest point of this strategy was leaving most of the responsibility with individual DPs and NTNs. This state was marked as ⁷⁴ being a risk for the entire mainstreaming process, even though DP empowerment could have been partially strengthened. Nevertheless, with regard to the relatively minimum experience of the DPs there was a great likelihood that the process mentioned above was to be non effective or with very low efficiency unless the situation was solved.

Currently, the National Mainstreaming Strategy has been adapted and the MA plays its role during vertical mainstreaming. This strategy is a framework document only, and the key

⁷³ This part is based on an email questionnaire survey that took place at the end of February 2008 and on other material provided by MA CIP EQUAL in Great Britain.

⁷⁴ EURO SERVICE GROUP (2006), p. 115

materials for the implementation of mainstreaming are the updated methodology instructions issued by the MA and NSS for DPs and NTNn projecting the inclusion of the MA into vertical mainstreaming from autumn 2007 onwards. In terms of assessment of the development of conditions for the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy it is important to emphasise the role of external experts, included into NTN activities as part of vertical mainstreaming, which was altered during the first half of 2008. In general, in the given period the emphasis should have been mostly on the final recipients of vertical mainstreaming with regard to coordinated MA activities (e.g. letters of the Minister for Work and Social Matters, and in terms of MoLSA in the meetings of MA and relevant departments). This step was taken after establishing the fact that the DP outputs created as part of individual NTN were designated for target recipients across all individual NTNn. A key role was adopted by the MA in terms of vertical mainstreaming as the MA started addressing given recipients themselves. If the given recipients are interested in the given output, they are not contacted by NTN, but by the DP or MA directly. The role of NTN is mostly marginal in the final phase of vertical mainstreaming (except for the joint NTN outputs but these form only a small part in terms of all EQUAL outputs and their enforcement is fully implemented and managed by the given NTN). The implemented changes show that NTN plays an important role in vertical mainstreaming mainly in the preparatory, dissemination and validation phases.

The National Mainstreaming Strategy is at the national level further divided into single mainstreaming strategies by individual NTNn stating all activities, objectives, sectors and the persons included. With regard to the evaluation of relevance, complexity, feasibility and sustainability of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level it is necessary to assess the differences between the applied horizontal and vertical mainstreaming. In 2006 and 2007 individual DPs showed they were well prepared for horizontal mainstreaming activities as mentioned above.

The Context of the Progress and Development until Now

The allocation of competencies between involved institutions and subjects in the CR is stated in the National Mainstreaming Strategy for the EQUAL Community Initiative for the Czech Republic (last version from June 2007, p. 1.2). In 2006 activities, which were focused on the preparation of implementation of the mainstreaming principle in the CR, took place, i.e. individual NTNn started working with the support of the MA and NSS. There was some criticism with regard to the late launch of NTNn and their mainstreaming links. Nevertheless, problems can also be seen in other areas related to the overall understanding of mainstreaming activities at the DP level. Till the beginning of 2008 DPs focused mainly on the dissemination activities, i.e. the distribution of information on the work of individual DPs and the obtained results, and not on the transmission of the project outcomes into everyday practice or public policies.

According to the available reports on the implementation of the national mainstreaming strategy in 2007 it has always been stated that the implementation procedure of the National Mainstreaming Strategy was implemented in accordance with the plan.⁷⁵ At the same time it was stated that all National Thematic Networks (NTN) are active and fulfil the projected

⁷⁵ See for example MoLSA (2007e), p. 5, MoLSA (2007f), p. 6

time schedule for the stipulated NTN activities in accordance with the National Mainstreaming Strategy.⁷⁶ During the first half of 2007 the first final versions of the mainstreaming strategies for individual NTNs were completed, clarified and made more specific in order to fulfil the framework of their own strategies, both in 2007 and in the present time.⁷⁷ From this point of view it is possible to assess the complexity, relevance and feasibility very positively using key background materials, nevertheless during the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy both the NSS and MA staff are still dealing with system errors. In 2007 the problem of inclusion of external experts in some NTNs deepened as not all experts and policy makers in the Czech Republic were ready to take up the task. The role of external experts is regarded as very important for vertical and horizontal mainstreaming but more partial problems were experienced in 2007 in the following areas:⁷⁸

- The contribution of nominated experts for individual NTN proved insufficient. This was caused by the fact that many nominated experts came from the operational level of public administration in the CR and although the experts were able to provide methodology advice, they did not have more significant experience or possibilities of wider enforcement and application of CIP EQUAL results.
- The differences in the level of inclusion of individual experts for each NTNs deepened (more specifically the nominated experts did not participate in the meetings or their participation was passive and brought no contribution) – this fact was caused by the setting of the motivational environment for external experts within NTNs (the absence of financial and non-financial motivational stimuli).
- Other external experts either did not attend NTN meetings regularly or they did not attend the meetings at all (in particular in NTN D, NTN A and NTN B)⁷⁹ – this problem was caused by splitting up the professional focus of the activities of individual DPs involved in the given NTN, the biggest impact was visible in NTN D.
- In some NTNs the role of experts has been very important (the participation of Job Centre representatives was viewed very positively). In some NTNs more work has to be done by DP representatives, which is the result of the overall problem of including external experts in the NTN activities within the CIP EQUAL process. If in the troublesome NTNs some DPs were not able to enforce their outcomes and outputs, they focused primarily on horizontal mainstreaming via their own activities (or vertical mainstreaming at the local or regional levels).

In view of these problems, the MA received a list of experts in individual NTNs stating their participation in NTN meetings held up until then. The list indicated experts who had to be reminded to participate more in the work of the NTN and the list also indicated posts where new nominations had to be made (MoLSA 2007e, p. 4). The MA approached relevant experts to participate in the given NTNs. Apart from this procedure an overview of non-active experts was prepared in order to discuss the relevant issues with them. The NSS pointed out

⁷⁶ MoLSA (2007f), p. 3

⁷⁷ See also MoLSA (2007f), p. 12–13

⁷⁸ MoLSA (2007e), p. 4, 16

⁷⁹ According to MoLSA (2007g, p. 4) the included experts were very active in NTNs, in particular in NTN E, C, F. In these cases the experts contribute to discussions, help with the creation of a mainstreaming strategy and come up with possible proposals to assert NTNs.

the main conditions and reasons for the experts to participate in NTN meetings referring to their professional interest and overall commitment to the given issues which cannot be ensured by any directives.⁸⁰ Nevertheless it is clear that motivational features only started to be increasingly used for the inclusion of external experts in the last period and in particular for a better coordination of the NTNs and the experts. In October 2007 the worst situations were found in NTN D, NTN A and NTN B. On the other hand, a relatively good level of expert inclusion was shown in NTN E, C and F in particular. To a certain extent the size issue and thematic definition of certain NTNs proved to be problematic as these NTNs entered a magic circle of low activity of DP as the creators/bearers of innovations with a prime function to incite external experts into action. In thematic large NTN the problem was most tangible (for more details on the “magic circle” of low DP activity within NTN see the Chapter discussing the Current Activities Focused on the Support of Mainstreaming Mechanisms).

The next area was the coordination of mainstreaming activities of the NTN with regular meetings (at least 2 meetings a year) of all NTN chairs and MA representatives involved in mainstreaming, NSS representatives and other relevant persons. These meetings should prevent any duplicity in mainstreaming activities, in particular with regard to politicians within the vertical mainstreaming process. At the same time the meetings made the communication between individual NTNs more efficient.⁸¹ The involvement of trade unions (e.g. HK, Professional Association of Businessmen) and politicians at the national level into vertical mainstreaming proved very weak. The last evaluation of the mainstreaming strategy available shows that in 2007 the issue of representation of external experts in NTN was accentuated, along with the issue of mutual coordination of individual activities of NTN and their financing, and the preparation of conditions for the assessment and validation of innovation and good practice. The first half of 2008 saw a further deepening of the National Mainstreaming Strategy, in particular in terms of long-term inclusion of experts and experts from the Job Centres into NTN work, and the coordination of vertical mainstreaming by the MA.

The level of relevance of the National Mainstreaming Strategy CIP EQUAL with regard to DP activities was also assessed in the questionnaire survey, and the main results are listed in Appendix 15. The possibilities of horizontal mainstreaming are very positively assessed in the part on the possibilities of learning about the outputs of other DPs within the NTNs and sharing of experience by individual NTNs. The possibility of making contacts with external experts is also viewed very positively, nevertheless around 15% of respondents answered that this was not an important criterion for them.

Partial Summary of the Assessment of the Mainstreaming Strategy

Assessment of the relevance of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level

The National Mainstreaming Strategy has been regularly updated to reflect the needs of the DP, NTN and MA and in order to be relevant for the activities of given subjects. The coordination of the NTN operation via the National Mainstreaming Strategy was important in particular for individual DPs and their application of horizontal mainstreaming.

⁸⁰ MOLSA (2007f), pp. 4–5

⁸¹ MOLSA (2007e), p. 6

Considering the fact that the inclusion of experts into NTN activities in terms of vertical mainstreaming has brought only partial success, MA started to coordinate its vertical mainstreaming activities much more. This amendment of the strategy did not represent a major turnover, but it has furthered the relevance of MA possibilities during the enforcement of CI EQUAL outputs with regard to policy makers.

Assessment of complexity of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level

The National Mainstreaming Strategy can be regarded as a complex strategy hoping for the inclusion of all significant impacts, processes and factors into the mainstreaming process at the national level. The material context of completing individual parts of the National Mainstreaming Strategy was often complicated in some cases (for example the operation of NTNs in terms of the level of participation of the nominated experts); nevertheless, the reasons for partial problems were gradually addressed and solved. The complexity of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level must also be viewed from a long-term perspective as the actual enforcement of CIP EQUAL outputs into the legislative system of the coordination of the labour market and the functioning of social politics becomes viable over a longer period of time (in some cases DP projects also focus on changing the public awareness of the discussed issues which deepens the complexity analysed).

Assessment of feasibility of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level

Till the end of 2007 the feasibility of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level was most affected by the operation of individual NTNs that showed very different levels of efficiency. Leaving a major part of responsibility with individual DPs and NTNs was regarded as a risk by previous CIP EQUAL evaluations for the entire mainstreaming process. In this regard the regular updating of the National Mainstreaming Strategy can be viewed as a suitably flexible method of solving the feasibility of the activities planned and obtaining the stipulated mainstreaming objectives along with increasing the efficiency of the implemented procedures. Considering the experience of all subjects included in the implementation of CIP EQUAL in the CR, this was the only solution and guidance learnt from the experience. For vertical mainstreaming several barriers have been identified that have had a negative affect on its feasibility, these were included in the previous Chapter dedicated to the current activities focused on the support of mainstreaming mechanisms.

Assessment of sustainability of the mainstreaming strategy at the national level

Considering the fact that CIP EQUAL is currently in its final stage of implementation, it is advisable to focus on the potential completion of the substance of the National Mainstreaming Strategy for the following period. The system of NTN operation has been integrated into the new generation of programmes financed from the ESF for the programme period 2007–2013. For example the OP LZZ, with the possibility of networking is anchored in the issue of international cooperation. In this regard the conditions and environment for sustaining the CIP EQUAL activities at the national level have been created. With regard to the long-term character of the complexity of mainstreaming it is necessary to include the MA operational programmes financed from the ESF into these networks.

Main Recommendations

Based on the implemented surveys consisting of desk-research, a web questionnaire and structured interviews, the assessment team proposes the following recommendations:

- It is essential to use more motivational tools to attract external experts to the programmes financed from the ESF, in particular to secure a better coordination of the NTN approach to these experts. We have to consider the insufficiencies of thematic less defined NTNs whose DPs have often very different aims and which create common strategies very complicated for possible baseline of contacts linking on experts and policy makers. Nevertheless, it is advisable to have an overall system for the inclusion of external experts ready, and to clearly define the roles of individual subjects in terms of the implementation structure (in particular it is advisable to consider a system of financial and non-financial motivation, in particular for the representatives of the public sector, e.g. financial remuneration for a professional guarantor of NTN activities, free participation in educational seminars in the CR and abroad, publications for academics etc).
- In terms of the mainstreaming needs, we would recommend to strengthen the coordination of mainstreaming activities for the newly established NTN in the programmes financed from the ESF in the 2007–2013 period for objectively developed experience in the framework of CIP EQUAL (via relevant NTN chairs, MA representatives involved in mainstreaming, NSS representatives and other relevant persons).
- More intense activities regarding the coordination of financing CIP EQUAL activities after the completion of implementation of this programme, i.e. post 2008, with regard to other ESF programmes in the 2007–2013 period will be needed with the aim to use the existing experience of the DP CIP EQUAL and to apply this experience within the projects financed from the ESF in the 2007–2013 period. For example, the coordination of financing can be secured by including the assessment criterion regarding the applicant's experience of the given issue (development of innovative products, its testing, application, distribution – mainstreaming) and the point allocation system. It is advisable to prepare an assessment for the next objective progress of CIP EQUAL activities with regard to the importance and nature of the 'coordination' mentioned above that would be used in the first shortened programme period as a type of laboratory for the development of new tools for the labour market, and the social and employment politics. This assessment could take place as part of the mid-term assessment of relevant operational programmes when an emphasis would be put on a certain 'horizontal criterion', i.e. the impact of CIP EQUAL activities on the issue monitored within the given programme. This approach would improve the objective continuity of single activities, and increase the likelihood of bigger impacts of CIP EQUAL in the CR in the following programme period of 2007–2013.

4.6 Mainstreaming monitoring tools at the programme level

Mainstreaming tools identification and description

By monitoring tools, the authors of the present study understand particularly monitoring indicators, the methods of their collection, their possible generalisation with regard to the effects of mainstreaming, and the responsibility for their evaluation.

The settings of mainstreaming indicators are different compared to other traditional indicators:

- No target values are defined for these monitoring indicators, with respect to the specific nature of mainstreaming.
- They apply to NTN rather than projects (yet DPs describe in their technical reports how and to what extent mainstreaming is done in specific projects). How much monitoring indicators are followed is regularly updated by NSS in a national mainstreaming strategy implementation report, which is submitted to the MA (the data from the March 2008 implementation report was used for this version of evaluation).

Under the mainstreaming principle, monitoring is done on a progressive basis, that is, indicator data are entered for the relevant monitoring indicators according to the current development in CIP EQUAL. Monitoring indicators relate to NTNs rather than particular projects. With a view to the fact that target values have not been determined and that specific indicator data are entered subsequently, it is rather difficult to comprehensively evaluate the mainstreaming success rate due to the varying objectives of NTN.

Continuity in indicator interpretation is a key precondition for quality continuous mainstreaming monitoring; it is suitable to test the indicators and the system of data collection prior to when the implementation of any programme is started. Any change to the indicators and particularly to their interpretation in the course of data collection result in more or less inconsistent final data and in the demotivation of the entities that are to fulfil the same.

Overview of findings according to structured interviews:

- The CIP EQUAL indicators failed to be set optimally at the beginning of implementation (this extends to mainstreaming monitoring indicators) because there had been no experience with similar programmes in the Czech Republic.
- Partial changes were adopted after continuous evaluations and on the basis of the resulting recommendations, in order to ensure quality and comparable data for monitoring and evaluation and make the monitoring of them simpler for the recipient. After the changes in indicators, it was ensured that the recipients themselves could enter data into the Monit IS MSSF electronically by using the Benefit IS MSSF.
- Some indicators were modified in 2006 (approved at the sixth meeting of the Monitoring Committee held 11 December 2006). In principle, the indicators were not extended substantially, but rather specified in more detail and defined more precisely; yet some new indicators were included, such as in respect of principle compliance monitoring (e.g. product typology). On the other hand, some indicators,

such as types of person or days on training courses, failed to be defined unambiguously, so the values in these indicators are not comparable across DPs. The motivation of the MA in introducing the changes was to burden recipients as little as possible and only to concentrate, in CIP EQUAL monitoring, on the relevant indicators which had been defined clearly and precisely.

- Within data collection activities, the most severe problems encountered were concurrently associated with the interpretation of individual indicators at the programme level during their conversion from paper to electronic format.

The fulfilment of indicators is monitored at NTN level, and the indicators to be fulfilled under mainstreaming strategies of particular projects are monitored and reported in technical reports. The National Mainstreaming Strategy makes reference to the basic CIP EQUAL mainstreaming monitoring indicators and these were fulfilled as at March 2008 as follows [the tables below are taken from MPSV, 2007g]:

Table 33: Monitoring indicators – contacts

Indicator - contacts	Personal	In writing	Description – who, when, benefit, quality, why
Contact with politicians at the national level	7	–	<p>5 – NTN E – Gender focal points meeting on 8 March 2007 Ministry officers were presented the projects involved in NTN E and contacts for potential collaboration were established.</p> <p>2 – NTN C – discussions on draft 1 of the subsidies programme for social economy on 8 March 2007. The DP representatives and experts who take part in NTN C meetings discussed the draft text of the subsidies programme with MPSV officials. Through this discussion, the experience of DP and experts was communicated to policy makers, and it is possible that the draft text will be modified in future on the basis of this discussion. The discussion was also beneficial for DPs because it was an opportunity for them to receive first-hand information about the MPSV's plans for the next programme period.</p>
Contact with politicians at the local level	4	–	NTN E – Gender focal points meeting on 8 March 2007
Outside experts at NTN meeting (apart from the existing basis of NTN)	8	7	<p>NTN C meeting on 25 and 26 July 2006 (see minutes) Ms Milena Černá – president of SKOK⁸² and executive director of <i>Výbor dobré vůle</i> and <i>Nadace Olgy Havlové</i>. It is suitable to use the social services experience for planning NTN C activities, such as organising round tables in regions and mediating contacts in particular regions. 9 March 2007 – NTN C meeting – Třinec</p>

⁸² SKOK (*Spolek Oborové Konference nestátních neziskových organizací působících v sociální a zdravotně sociální oblasti*) is a civic association engaged in activities following up on the activities of four national professional conferences held between 1996 and 2001 by non-government non-profit organisations (NNOs) operating in the field of social and healthcare-and-social services, and the activities of Standing Commissions of professional conference NNOs operating in the field of social and healthcare-and-social services (SKOK). The purpose of SKOK is to contribute to the development of and quality improvements in social and healthcare-and-social services in the Czech Republic. One of SKOK's inventions is discussions on selected topical subjects (also referred to as *reflektování*). For more information about SKOK please visit <http://www.skok.biz>.

			<p>Mr Prabir Ganguly – CIP EQUAL outside evaluator</p> <p>28 May and 25 June 2007 NTN C meeting Hana Vosmíková – Akademie soc. podnikání, Nadace VIA Marie Dohnalová – FHS, Civic Sector Department Ivo Jupa – Nový Prostor Lucie Lankašová – FVKV – a student of social economy Magdalena Hunčová – Univerzita J. E. Purkyně v Ústí nad Labem</p> <p>30 May 2007 NTS F meeting Jiří Hejnc – chief executive of Hejnc</p>
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Table 34: Monitoring indicators – meetings

Indicator – meetings	Initiated by members	Initiated by non-members	Description – who, when, benefit, quality, why
Official meeting of NTN		A – 11. 4. 2006 B – 11. 4. 2006 C – 11. 4. 2006 D – 11. 4. 2006 E – 11. 4. 2006 F – 16. 5. 2006	First NTN working meeting as scheduled. For attending members see meeting minutes. Members introduced in more detail, emphasis put on the introduction of the mainstreaming strategies of particular DPs. Suggestions as to what NTN should do next and the tasks to be done by next meeting (see meeting minutes).

	<p>C – 25. a 26. 7. 2006</p> <p>C – 13. a 14. 10. 2006</p> <p>A – 3. 1. 2007 B – 14. 3. 2007 C – 8. a 9. 3. 2007 D – 22. 3. 2007 E – 18. 1. 2007 F – 7. 2. 2007 F → 28. 3. 2007</p> <p>A – 18. 4 2007 12. 6. 2007 B – 25. 6. 2007 C – 10. 5. 2007 E – 3. 5. 2007 F – 30. 5. 2007</p> <p>C – 31. 7. 2007 E – 13. 9. 2007</p>	<p>A – 17. 10. 2006 B – 17. 10. 2006 D – 17. 10. 2006 E – 17. 10. 2006 F – 17. 10. 2006</p>	<p>Second working meeting of NTN C, held in the NSS building. Ms Milena Černá, representing SKOK, introduced to members. Group focused on specifying the outputs of particular DPs and defining, together with experts, the mainstreaming potential and the objectives for the group. Suggestions as to what NTN should do next and the tasks to be done by next meeting (see meeting minutes).</p> <p>NTN C – third meeting held in Odry, along with a round table ‘Social Economy in the Czech Republic’ a visit to a social firm of Gerlich Odry. Finalisation of mainstreaming strategy, discussions over evaluation and validation of good practice. Meeting attended by Mr Meteicuc; his presence was beneficial very much, especially because of his practical experience with running a social firm. For details see meeting minutes.</p> <p>NTNs A, B, D, E, F – for attendees see meeting minutes. Working on developing mainstreaming strategies. DPs showed a good approach to the activity of NTN and better understanding of the purpose of the NTN job.</p> <p>NTNs A, B, C, D, E, F – as some DPs and experts have joined in NTN discussions, all meetings are initiated by NTN members and it is not just an obligation to hold meetings. Some networks held several meetings in the period in question. Specifying MS in more detail; planning joint activities; and discussing innovation evaluation, innovation validation, good practices, and fulfilment of MS.</p> <p>Official meetings of NTNs A, B, C, E, and F were held in the second quarter on dates given in column 2 of this table. Specific data as to each meeting are available in section 2.1 and in meeting minutes.</p> <p>NTNs C and E – discussions concerning validations, fulfilling mainstreaming strategies, and the current number of represented DPs.</p>
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	A – 9. 10. 2007 B – 11. 10. 2007 C – 8. 10. 2007 – 5. 11. 2007 D – 17. 11. 2007 E – 9. 11. 2007 F – 11. 10. 2007 – 12. 11. 2007 A – 15. 1. 2008 B – 12. 2. 2008 C – 21. 1. 2008 D – 13. 2. 2008 E – 24. 1. 2008 F – 7. 2. 2008	A – 18. 3. 2008 B – 25. 3. 2008 C – 17. 3. 2008 E – 27. 3. 2008 F – 18. 3. 2008.	<p>Official meetings of all the NTN's were held in the second quarter on dates given in column 2 of this table. Specific data as to each meeting are available in section 2.1 and in meeting minutes.</p> <p>Two meetings were held in Quarter 1, apart from NTN D. In that period NTN meetings focused on the following topics: involvement and operation of the long-term partner; vertical mainstreaming; execution of NTN's MS strategies; and validation at DP level. The second meeting was in the most part dedicated to preparing for the final NTN conference and selecting products.</p>
Informal meetings on behalf of the whole NTN	B – 19. 6. 2006 C – 28. 5. 2007 – 25. 6. 2007		<p>A substitute DP meeting. The first NTN meeting was attended by a low number of DP representatives, so the chairman summoned project representatives for a briefing to inform them of what had been discussed at the first meeting, including the opinions expressed by experts.</p> <p>Informal NTN C meetings were held in Quarter 2.</p>
Meetings organised on behalf of individual members for the support of NTN	–	–	

Table 35: Monitoring indicators – publicity

Indicator – publicity	Answers	Description – who, when, benefit, quality, why
Bulletins	1	NTN D – Prepared a joint NTN D bulletin to use for the NTN annual conference held on 19 November 2007.
Media – press	4	Hospodářské noviny, Právo, a ČTK report (outputs of the press conference on 24 November 2006) – in the week after the conferences on 24 and 25 November. NTN E – three press releases (the Antidiscrimination Act, GFP meetings, and international day of equality) NTN A – an article covering good practices of selected NTN A projects, published in the 12/2007 issue of the Subsidies monthly supplement of Hospodářské noviny NTN F – a strip cartoon.
Media – radio, TV	3	NTN press conference on 24 November 2006 (those present: the MA, NTN, and projects 17 and 111), MPSV press release of 28 November 2006 Český rozhlas – interviews with the MA and NTN representatives and all the projects under NTN F (NTN annual conference on 24 November 2006) Press conference on the occasion of the second NTN annual conference on 19 November 2007 (those present: minister Nečas for the MA, Mr Faber for EK), a press release
Expert articles	–	
Seminars, conferences, workshops	5	NTN opening conference on 8 February 2006 NTN annual conference on 24 November 2006 Round table ‘Social Policy the Czech Way II’ – Odry – the event was prepared by several NTN C members and experts and accompanied with a visit to a social firm. Transfer of good practices. Round table speakers familiarised with the operation of NTN. NTN E – Gender focal points meeting on 8 March 2007. Ministry officers were presented the projects involved in NTN E and contacts for potential collaboration were established. NTN annual conference on 19 November 2007

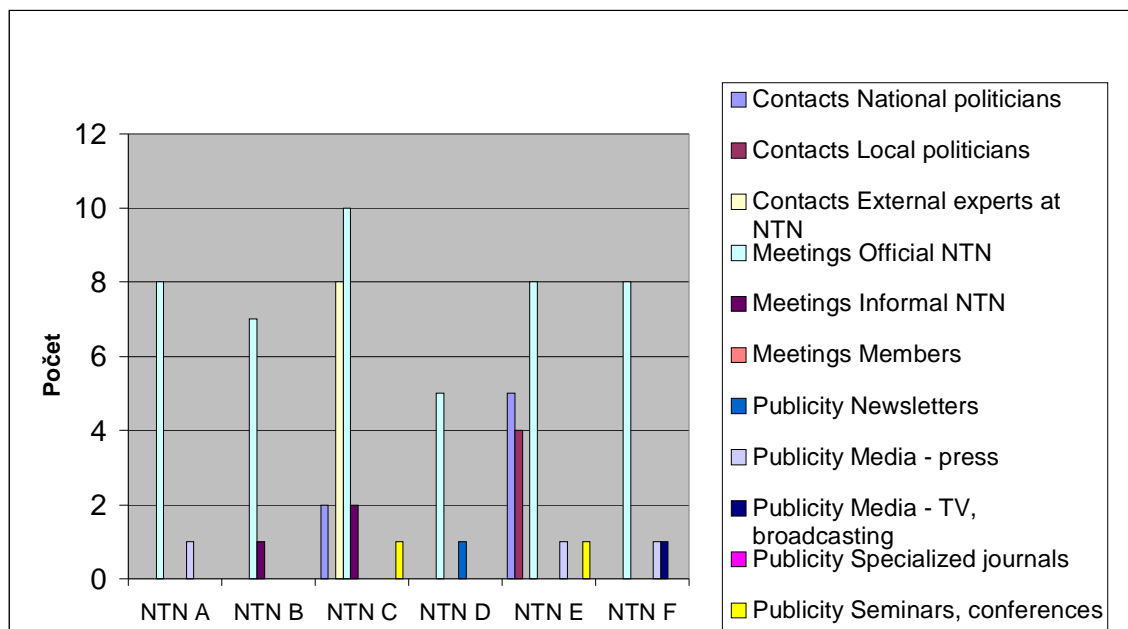
Table 36: Monitoring indicators – practices

Indicator – best practices	Description – who, when, benefit, quality, why
Good/Best & Bad practices (including information on the methodology of their selection)	49 validated products

Monitoring indicators for individual NTN

The monitoring indicators are monitored at NTN level in regular national mainstreaming strategy implementation reports.

Diagram 1: Fulfilment of monitoring indicators by NTN



Source: MPSV, 2007g

The diagram clearly shows a varying degree of NTN activity – NTNs C and E are the most active in terms of fulfilment of indicators. Both these groups were very active in terms of contacts, meetings, and seminars. NTN F managed to get good media coverage. The involvement of NTNs D and B was below average.

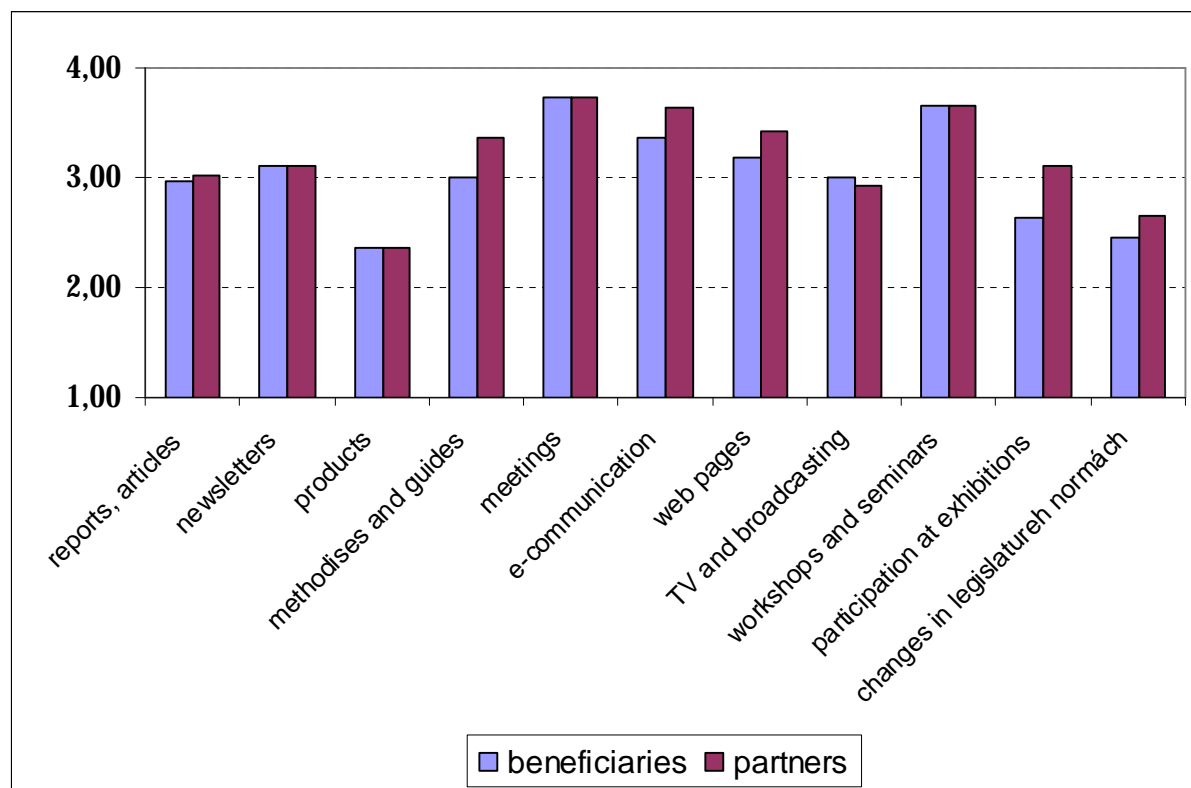
The above findings on the involvement of NTNs obtained by an analysis of reports on the implementation of the national mainstreaming strategy in the sphere of fulfilment of indicators are in agreement with those obtained in structured interviews, that is, that the principal factor affecting the degree of involvement had been the integrity and consistence of the objectives and activities of the DPs. In some NTNs, such as NTNs D and B), there was an obvious disunity in focus of the activities of DPs, with this resulting in an overall lower involvement of the whole NTN in fulfilling the above indicators subject to monitoring.

Evaluation of information concerning how target groups used the outcomes of DP activity

The questionnaire survey contained a question which was to find out how DPs monitored the results of mainstreaming, that is, whether or not they gathered information on whether or not their activities were used by target groups. The chart clearly shows that the communication methods rated as the best are personal meetings and seminars. The worst rating was given to monitoring DP products (in physical form) and legislation changes.

For CIP EQUAL, the evaluation of qualitative indicators, like the description of the benefit, quality and explanation of the effects of such an activity, is important. This, however, is treated under the assessment of the CIP EQUAL impact on the labour market.

Diagram 2: The use by target groups of the outcomes of DP activity (4 is the best rating)



Source: Questionnaire survey

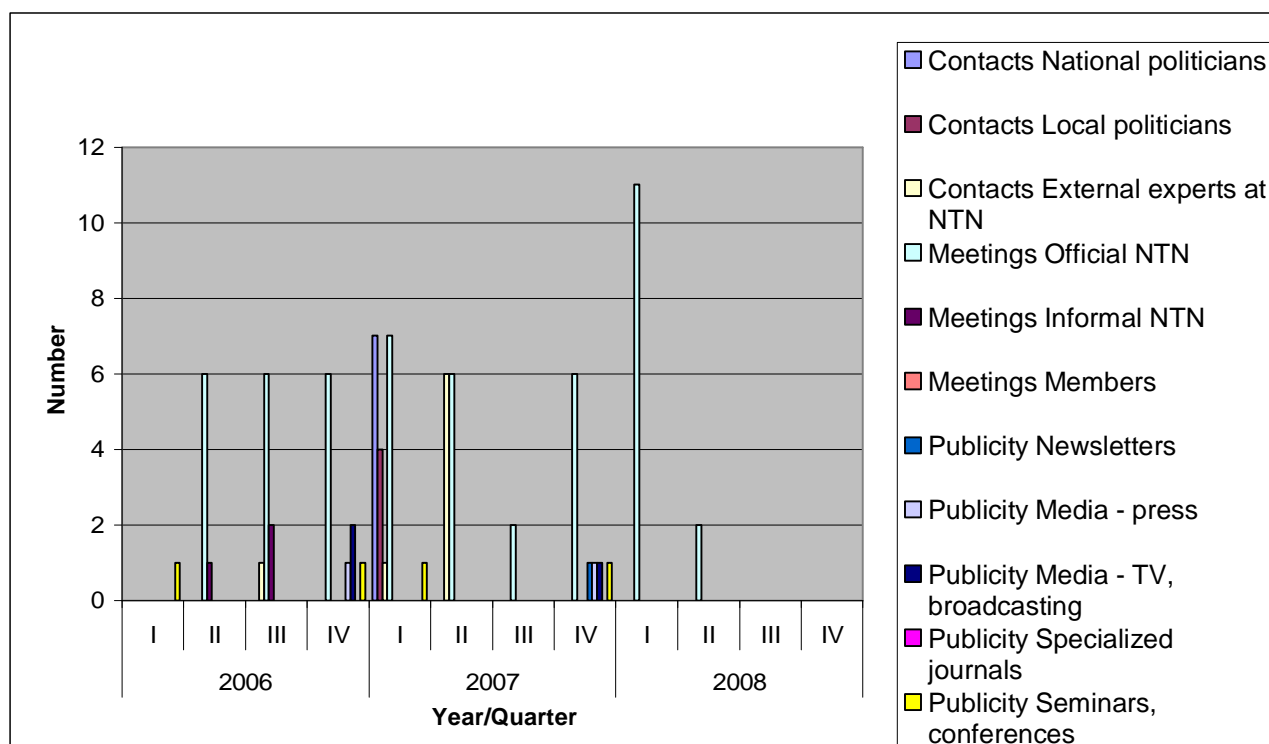
Key: the question as formulated in the questionnaire

How do you monitor the results of mainstreaming, that is, how do you find out about whether the target groups actually use DP activities?

(0 – not applicable; 1 – the method provides clear information about the use of DP results by target groups; 2 – this was a major aid in terms of gathering information; 3 – the method is usable; 4 – the method provided only a little information that was useful; 5 – the method only provided limited amount of information; 6 – the monitoring method provided no information)

Development in monitoring indicators in mainstreaming

Diagram 3: Fulfilment of NTN monitoring indicators development



Note: The diagram does not include undated events.

Source: *National Mainstreaming Strategy Implementation Report (March 2008)*

The execution, thus fulfilment of indicators progressed in several waves:

- NTN meetings were held relatively regularly (the beginning of 2008 saw a considerable increase in the number of meetings).
- It is usually NTN annual conferences (held towards the end of the year) that attract publicity.
- The most networking with politicians took place at the beginning of 2007.

The most difficulties are encountered in fulfilling the indicators which DPs do not have under their control entirely – especially networking with politicians (both parties need to agree for an appointment to take place; moreover, the results of an appointment are uncertain).

Assessing monitoring tools in terms of their reliability and relevance

Monitoring indicators are monitored at NTN level in regular national mainstreaming strategy implementation reports, where the MA is always submitted a report for the previous quarter. Indicators are aggregated from individual projects, in respect of which they are monitored and reported in DP technical reports.

The NSS does no direct checks on the delivered mainstreaming activities. Mainstreaming is checked through on-site inspections under the technical part (e.g. checks on meeting minutes records); in addition, NTN communicate their upcoming activities at their meetings.⁸³

The review under way produced no major comments as to the current setting of the monitoring mechanisms in terms of reliability.

Investigation of CIP EQUAL's immediate impacts on the labour market is very difficult, given the monitoring tools that are available. Impacts are rather perceived as a long-term matter. It is possible to monitor the immediate impacts on the labour market to some extent at least, such as in the results of validations, which are usually successful because of formalised validation procedures. Generally, it can be stated that mainstreaming indicators lie beyond the classic domain of monitoring indicators and that there is no direct link to the labour market. It is only possible to consider to some extent a link provided by meetings of DP representatives with those legislators who make laws that have a direct impact on the labour market. These assessment aspects are treated under a section of CIP EQUAL impacts evaluation.

Partial conclusions and recommendations

Summing up monitoring indicators, it may be stated that the mainstreaming indicators are set differently compared to other classic indicators. No target values are defined for these monitoring indicators, with respect to the specific nature of mainstreaming. To what degree the monitoring indicators are fulfilled is regularly updated by NSS in national mainstreaming strategy implementation reports. With a view to the fact that target values have not been determined and that specific indicator data are entered subsequently, it is rather difficult to make a comprehensive evaluation of the mainstreaming success rate due to the varying objectives of NTN. A key precondition for ongoing and high-quality mainstreaming monitoring is interpretation continuity with regard to individual indicators. These indicators are gathered from individual DPs and subsequently aggregated for programme level. It is advisable to test the indicators as well as the indicator data collection system prior to the implementation of any project being started. Any change to the indicators and particularly to their interpretation in the course of data collection result in more or less inconsistent final data and in the demotivation of the entities that are to ascertain the same. This analysis of indicators supported the findings of this evaluation; any direct links to the labour market, however, failed to be identified.

The system of the monitoring indicators is already adapted and completed and we therefore do not expect any major modifications in the monitoring indicators before the programme implementation is over.

⁸³ On inspection visits NSS people also give DPs advice, such as what can be done with a particular product or how appropriately set and time product mainstreaming, thus promoting transfer of information in particular.

4.7 Methods of securing transfer to policies and actual practice

As a condition for the entry of each DP in the Czech Republic to the process of securing mainstreaming, they had to have well elaborated working programmes, schedules of activities, budgets and most of all – duly formulated mainstreaming plans. Based on these and other documents, a particular DP has been allowed access to Action 2 and 3.⁸⁴ In this sense, the activities of Action 3 were linked to Action 2: i.e. within the development of innovative products, each DP had to plan the dissemination and promotion of such project outcomes in the policies at the national or regional level, including the application in actual practice. Actions 2 and 3 are generally seen as the CIP EQUAL implementation phase in which DPs deliver their activities at national and transnational level in terms of testing and applying their developed innovative products on the labour market.

Action 3, i.e. translation of policies into actual practice, was implemented in the Czech Republic in compliance with the CIP EQUAL programme document, which allowed announcements of additional calls. The detailed procedures of announcing and evaluating additional calls are specified in the CIP EQUAL Programme Addendum, the Manual for CIP EQUAL Action 3 Funding Applicants, and the Evaluation Manual for CIP EQUAL Action 3 Funding Applications. The following chapters deal with the partial evaluation of Action 3 process aspects in the Czech Republic, with partial analyses of foreign cases (United Kingdom and Slovakia).

Action 3 additional calls

In 2006, keeping in mind the low level of drawing of funds, an additional call only for Action 3⁸⁵ was published, none of the submitted projects, however, was recommended by the selection committee for funding. Based on this development and the financial changes that occurred in the programme (following the Commission Resolution C(2007)2061), another additional call for Action 3 was launched in February 2007.⁸⁶ The current development of CIP EQUAL⁸⁷ may be generally assessed positively, from the viewpoint understanding the programme as an instrument focused on the innovative aspects of the behaviour of the labour market, with necessary support by vertical and horizontal mainstreaming. In this sense, within the additional call in CIP EQUAL, a total of 26 projects were accepted in February 2007 for the utilisation of funds for the activities focused on Action 3 (41 projects were submitted in total), 15 of which are new DP's. The absolute increase of the number of projects, however, is not an achievement by itself; it is the characteristics and content of the projects. In the new DP's, also the organisations participating in existing DP's belonging to members, which however respond to new issues and activities of prospective co-operation with material content supporting the objectives of CIP EQUAL, while such issues and

⁸⁴ MPSV (2007a), p. 16

⁸⁵ With regard to changes in absorption capacity of the programme and to changes on the labour market in the Czech Republic, the allocation of financial resources among individual priorities and measures of CIP EQUAL has been changed.

⁸⁶ This call for Action 3 was published on 28 February 2007. Totally, CZK 119,039,238 was available for existing DP's taking part in Action 2 and 3 and further for newly established DP's. Within this call, the total sum of CZK 94,601,153 has been distributed.

⁸⁷ See also MPSV (2007b), p. 1

activities have so far appeared during the implementation of CIP EQUAL. From this point of view, the content of Action 3 may be characterised as working well and supporting particularly horizontal mainstreaming (intense co-operation within NTN's, new DP's throughout the individual NTN's). Conditions for a coordinated vertical mainstreaming were created by the MA in the first and second quarters of 2008.

The respective lists of recommended and non-recommended applications for CIP EQUAL Action 3 funding – CIP EQUAL Call 5 were published in late February 2008. As many as 46 projects had been submitted in this call, of which six were selected, 15 added to a 'project base', and 25 were recommended for rejection. The funding of the projects selected required successful fulfilment of both formal and subject-matter evaluation, including the necessary recommendation of the selection board. A relatively high number of project applications is attributable to unclear funding from the state budget and the strengthening exchange rate of the Czech crown to Euro – some of the allocated money was 'indirectly' drawn because of this exchange rate development. That was why the MA could not release the money for the given measures in late February and early March 2008 even though the original intent of that autumn 2007 call had been to get projects started in January/February 2008. The funds the current aid recipients had not drawn were offered to applicants according to the list of the project base. Yet it is necessary in this connection to make reference to the time risks associated with the implementation of such additional projects and their factual impacts in the mainstreaming principle.

Partial evaluation of Action 3 additional calls

In terms of the timing of Action 3 additional calls, the fourth call posed no problems to DPs either in form or in content. Moreover, it was clear that the recommendations of the previous CIP EQUAL evaluations had been taken into account considerably in designing the additional calls. As a result, most of the evaluations by project implementer representatives in respect of the fourth call are very positive. A minor problem occurred in additional call 5; the context is described in more detail in the previous section. The main drawback of additional call 5 was that it had been announced when its funding was unclear, especially in terms of the contribution from the Czech state budget. With respect to the strengthening CZK/EUR exchange rate an analysis was made of the use of funds, including estimates as to how much money would remain unused. For this reason, the projects in the project base were arranged on a list. Yet this approach shows little strategy, given the limited time for programme implementation in 2008, and casts doubts on the whole system.

Structured interviews at the MA and NSS levels showed that not all the selected projects complied with the nature and specific position of Action 3 in the implementation of CIP EQUAL. This problem may have been caused by the defined evaluation/selection criteria to some extent. Action 3 terminology should have been taken into account more in these criteria, e.g. expressly stating the phrase 'innovative output/product' and a question put so as to identify such a product developed for further dissemination. In this sense, the subsequent assessment of project applications could have been more leading not only for project applicants themselves, but also for assessors of projects submitted in Action 3 additional calls.

The following table shows the general positive and negative aspects of Action 3 additional calls.

Positive aspects of Action 3 additional calls	Negative aspects of Action 3 additional calls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From DPs point of view, it was possible to draw additional funds for activities of projects themselves for which DPs had not expected a broader extent and the overall dimension of the sense and nature of Action 3. • Increased collaboration across existing DPs resulting in enhanced horizontal mainstreaming. • Possibility of getting other new DPs involved in Action 3 activities, thus generally enhancing the CIP EQUAL implementation phase. • Project funds approved particularly in additional call 4 are successfully drawn without any major problems. • Any funds which have not been drawn can be offered to others for their activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the original timing of the most recent additional call 5 was right and was not expected to cause any problems, external circumstances and factors related to that confounding from the national budget had not been confirmed and to the exchange rate fluctuations raised uncertainty and put brakes on the administration of the whole selection process. • Risks associated with a lack of knowledge of the product to be further disseminated in Action 3, and with potentially interested parties and applicants at the time of the call. It was applicants/DPs, however, that were to define such products for themselves (be it either a product developed under CIP EQUAL or that outside CIP EQUAL). • The project implementation time limit planned in additional call 5 to expire early in quarter 3 of 2008, which, given the current situation, is a very short limit with very limited possibilities of achieving the actual and originally expected results in Action 3.⁸⁸

At the MA level, experience from other EU countries was used in preparing and implementing Action 3; in particular, a methodology for good practice/innovative products validation was prepared and introduced to DPs. This methodology is based on the Portuguese model discussed by representatives of the MA and those of NSS and the MA officers of CIP EQUAL in Portugal. The factor was their presence at the validation meeting, which was also attended by MA and NSS representatives from Sweden, Germany, and France.⁸⁹ Successful validation procedures are very important for mainstreaming from the technical and procedural point of view because the products the validation of which sound very likely to have a greater mainstreaming potential. The MA has adopted the Portuguese validation model with some modifications. The main modification consists in that the Czech model is based on the principle of voluntariness while Actions 2 and 3 are implemented separately in Portugal, with successful validation being a condition for admission to Action 3. In relation to this, the NSS and the MA representatives attended further methodology

⁸⁸ To comment on the negative aspect mentioned, it must be added that a large number of the call 4 projects were finished as at 31 August 2008, and almost all DP projects in call 5 were finished as at 31 August 2008; some projects' completion date had been scheduled for 30 October 2008.

⁸⁹ See also MPSV (2007b), p. 2; this document makes reference to a methodology seminar that was held for grant recipients on this topic in May 2007 introducing validation methodology; the seminar included a practical workshop for the attendees.

meetings in Lisbon discussing validation system settings in more detail. Also, the MA used experience from the United Kingdom with organising NTN, getting experts involved, and coordinating their work. Long-standing collaboration with the UK MA and exchange of information has been established. In terms of other EU countries, experience is asked for on a continuous and ad hoc basis.

Mainstreaming strategies selection criteria in the context of calls for submission of Action 3 funding applications

Mainstreaming strategies selection criteria in the context of calls for submission of Action 3 funding applications are specified, to a varied extent, in the following documents:

- CIP EQUAL Programme Addendum
- Manual for CIP EQUAL Action 3 Funding Applicants (see MPSV 2007h)
- Evaluation Manual for CIP EQUAL Action 3 Funding Applications (MPSV 2007i).

The Action 3 material criteria are not identical to those for the previous Actions because, in respect of Action 1 for instance, subject to assessment was also the understanding of implementation in all CIP EQUAL Actions as well as all the principles except for the thematic approach. Compared to Action 1, the material assessment was made considerably simpler by reducing the number of criteria from 19 to 5; the five criteria in Action 3 correspond to the five areas of material assessment in Action 1. The assessments before Actions 2 and 3 had been made using a different set of criteria, for DPA and TCA separately, and in participation of officers of NVF and the MA and the first round NTN experts. Experts from individual NTNs were invited to the process of developing selection criteria for Action 3, who were able to identify the mainstreaming potential.

It may be observed that there is a discrepancy between the presented selection criteria for Action 3 potential applicants and the unpublished assessment manual for assessors (MPSV 2007i). This unpublished manual specifies additional sub-criteria with logic links to CIP EQUAL activities; this additional information, however, is not included in the available material for DP representatives. The evaluator's team is therefore of the opinion that the essence and focus of Action 3 may have not been understood properly in respect of some projects which had been approved. On one hand, a project application should demonstrate the applicant's ability to understand the text of the call independently and formulate clear and comprehensible project intents corresponding to the call; on the other hand, precise and transparent identification of selection criteria would facilitate such understanding considerably. CIP EQUAL involves public funds and the system of distributing these funds should be as clear and transparent for all parties involved as possible. The question remains, however, who is to blame as far the assessment process is concerned because it was NSS officers that were in charge of assessing '*the criteria whereby to judge the fulfilment of the basic conditions for participating in the programme – the qualification criteria*'. Consequently, where a project failed to meet the requirements and nature of Action 3, no such application should have been submitted to material assessment.

As the evaluator's team believe, the criteria of the fulfilment of horizontal themes lack accurate justification in the case of assessing the fulfilment of the horizontal theme *sustainable*

development and information-based society. Moreover, to substantiate the fulfilment of these horizontal themes is more of a formal requirement with a very wide fulfilment scope.

The below criteria for the material focus of funding support applications are, according to the evaluator's team, satisfactory in general terms. There may be one critical comment in the context of mainstreaming application: the criteria for mainstreaming and dissemination are not mentioned directly (there is no clear specification of the assessment of proposed mainstreaming mechanisms, and evidence of the project applicant's experience with these activities is not provided). Information for applicants is only available through this table even though these aspects are included in the manual for evaluators. For this reason it is necessary to focus more on assessing the conditions set for the implementation of a project; they should create sufficient room to effect the expected impacts. Provided the below selection criteria are specified in more detail according to the above requirements, potential applicants would have to think about the actual implementation and interconnections of mainstreaming activities without any major emphasis on the formal setting of process matters of the given project. Consequently, the following may be added to the below criteria:

- After assessment of criterion 1 it is suitable to add a question examining the experience of the applicant for Action 3 funding; the question may be put as follows: How significant is the applicant's (DP partners') experience with the activities aimed at disseminating and promoting the innovative tool (e.g. effect a change in existing policies)? This criterion offers applicants a clearly defined scope of emphasis on the content of activities specific to Action 3.
- as a second criterion would be added by question: Has the applicant (including DPs partners) just clearly finished product, which is going to be mainstreamed? The purpose of such criterion is to include a clear message for applicants, that key are projects with a clear vision of the subject for mainstreaming. It is not possible, after the approval of such project, that applicant starts to find or develop products for mainstreaming.
- Under the question examining project impacts on target groups and on practices in the given field, another question should be added to find out about the mechanisms planned to ensure mainstreaming. This is not obvious in the given criterion. This supplementary question may be put as follows: How clear and appropriate is the applicant's choice of the mechanisms to ensure accomplishment of the planned project objectives and the impact on the target groups, and the policies and practices in the given field? A criterion formulated this way will specify the project scope subject to assessment in more detail and make the applicant pay the required attention to this aspect of project implementation.

Table 37: Funding support application material focus criteria

Funding support application material focus criteria	Maximum Points
How clearly is the establishment of a development partnership justified?	5
How clear is the distribution of activities and responsibilities among partners?	5
What are the project's impacts on its target groups and the practices in the given field?	5
What control mechanisms are ensured?	5
Is the budget clear and made in adequate detail?	5
Maximum Total Points	25

Source: *Appendix to Action 3 Applicants Manual, MPSV*

The Action 3 selection criteria are not regarded by DPs as posing problems to CIP EQUAL implementation. On the contrary, conducting structured interviews, we obtained answers making reference to the use of experience and recommendations of the previous programme phases in the Czech Republic.

Action 3 implementation in United Kingdom and Slovakia

Experiences with methods of securing transfer to policies and actual practice in the United Kingdom⁹⁰

In the United Kingdom, Action 3 was launched by a series of seminars in November 2002. Working together with especially DP representatives, each NTN created its own mainstreaming thematic plan in early 2003 complying with the basic Action 3 parameters and characteristics. Starting from April 2003, DPs began to make their own mainstreaming agreements with partners suggesting the plan for Action 3 implementation, that is, networking, dissemination and mainstreaming, and the definition of the project's objectives, activities and target groups. These activities were to be finished by the end of May 2003, and Action 3 was started on 15 November 2003.⁹¹ Generally speaking, Action 3 was implemented separately from other Actions, thus only focusing on networking, dissemination, and mainstreaming activities; consequently, the existing DPs as well as other organisations were provided support to carry out their activities in accordance with thematic mainstreaming strategies. All DPs were asked to participate and get involved in Action 3; their budgets amounted to 20% of those for Action 2. In round one, DPs defined their plans for Action 3 approximately a year's after Action 2 was started while in round two DPs defined their plans for Actions 2 and 3 simultaneously. Action 3 plans of individual DPs were reviewed and approved as part of the relevant NTN strategy. DPs in Action 3 may involve new partners with relevant experience and expertise.

The following were identified as the principal problematic aspects in Actions 2 and 3:

- Identify and provide evidence of the needs for match-funding.
- Ensure continuous involvement of the relevant policy makers in the activities by individual DPs; this was due particularly to changes in the government and some shifts in the understanding of the relevant policies with connections to impacts on CIP EQUAL.
- Address the need of intense attention to the progress of the general trend of public administration devolution in the United Kingdom throughout the whole period of CIP EQUAL implementation; this had to be correspondingly reflected in the objectives of DPs' mainstreaming strategies (i.e. the overall change of the original groups and persons to be impacted by Action 3).
- Address the need of particular care in preparing and delivering CIP EQUAL projects with respect to the phase of the political cycle and election period.

⁹⁰ This part is based on a partial questionnaire survey by electronic mail carried out in late February 2008 and the documents provided by the MA of CIP EQUAL in the United Kingdom.

⁹¹ See also LLOYD, Richard, HOWAT, Colin (2004), p. 44

Strengths and weaknesses of the British model of Action 3

The decision to get involved policy makers through NTN and in collaboration with DPs from the very beginning of CIP EQUAL implementation in the United Kingdom was reported as the crucial positive experience. By this, NTNs became a substantial aid tool for DPs in mediating the dialogue with policy makers and other national government experts.

The problematic aspects of Action 3 implementation were identified in synchronising the political cycle with the CIP EQUAL implantation phases and putting the outputs/results of DPs into practice.

The link between the call, the selection criteria chosen, and DPs' mainstreaming strategies was, to some extent, similar to that in CIP EQUAL implementation in the Czech Republic. Programme round one was comprised of two phases of assessment and selection. These consisted in reviewing the overall qualification of the given DP for the call, and judging by the total score under the eight criteria; a certain minimum score was required in respect of each criterion. At the same time, the compliance of project activities with the focus of CIP EQUAL objectives was assessed separately. These applications with scores were then referred to NTN representatives. In the relevant thematic areas, who expressed their opinions as to the compliance of the given application with the focus of the given NTN. An assessment system practically analogous to that used in round one was applied in round two, with the exception of adding special mainstreaming-oriented selection criteria and respective weights attached to them. All scored applications were then subjected to the assessment procedure identical to that in round one, though a special line was added to evaluate the project's innovativeness (for better comparison across DPs) and added value (see also GHK, 2005, p. 85). In this respect, the Czech assessment criteria were subjected to no major changes although these aspects were included in the assessor instructions. For this reason, it was more appropriate to put more emphasis on the aspects of project innovativeness and added value in Action 3 selection criteria in the Czech Republic.

Experiences with methods of securing transfer to policies and actual practice in Slovakia⁹²

In relation to the gradual implementation of the activities of Action 3 in Slovakia, it became apparent during 2006 and at the beginning of 2007 that individual DP's will not be able to create the required number of outcomes related to mainstreaming activities. Only the basic handbook of the European Commission has been available for this area "Mainstreaming – Making a change possible". A crucial task of the Slovak NSS thus consisted in continual enhancement of the methodological support for DP's, especially in the form of consultations with the following objectives:⁹³

- Assistance to DP's in correct understanding of the mainstreaming principle;
- Assistance to DP's in preparation of the mainstreaming plan at the level of their own

⁹² Partial summary and analysis of background data pursuant to the 2006 Annual Report of the Slovak NSS (Fond sociálneho rozvoja, 2007).

⁹³ See also Fond sociálneho rozvoja (2007), p. 7

project;

- Indirect enhancement of mainstreaming capacities of DP's, so that it can be transferred from their level to the common thematic network.

Thus, in practice, the personnel of the Slovak NSS focused on providing expert consultation before submitting financial and technical reports on projects, and further, they focused on assistance for DP's in adapting mainstreaming activities for the purpose of securing an effective and feasible mainstreaming plan. Certain obstacles were discovered during such consultation activities, which made this process rather difficult (e.g. the DP's tried to list basically all activities in the ongoing reports, without emphasising the fundamental ones, focusing on the mainstreaming of project outcomes – they focused rather on the outcomes of activities than on the results of their own projects, and also the low awareness of DP's regarding available information on mainstreaming and relying on the information obtained during the initial training in Action 3 were apparent).

Within the implemented mainstreaming activities, DP's identified particularly the *exchange of experience and various information- and education-related activities* (e.g. seminars, training, workshops, information meetings). *Publishing activities and co-operation with media* were also mentioned quite often. Use of the Internet, of project websites providing information on the results achieved so far, was also mentioned quite often. In this sense, individual DP's were in the dissemination phase. During 2007, individual DP's carried out an assessment and preparation for the transfer of experience and activities to other target groups and/or preparations for the application of changes in processes, strategies, policies or methodological documents.

The position of target groups in mainstreaming, the level of the principal responsibility of DPs, and collaboration of the MA and the CIP EQUAL NSS are specified in the following table according to IBS SLOVAKIA (2007, p. 24):

Phase	Responsibility for execution of activities in the given phase
Phase 1: INNOVATION	DP, NTN
Phase 2: TARGET GROUP	DP, NTN
Phase 3: EVALUATION	DP, NTN, RO, and NSS EQUAL
Phase 4: DISSEMINATION	DP, NTN, RO, and NSS EQUAL
Phase 5: TRANSFER	DP, NTN, target groups, RO, and NSS EQUAL

(As the CIP EQUAL basic units, DPs are actively involved in all phases of mainstreaming.)

At the same time, it was recommended to the MA that it should perceive more the possibilities of the use of the results of the National Mainstreaming Strategy in practice, or how the results were reflected in legislation. For this reason, it was proposed to set up a special group to be comprised of experts and members of political parties, in order to

enhance the practical impacts of CIP EQUAL. In the Czech Republic, it would only be possible to follow this approach through a co-ordinating team across the existing NTN's; such a special team, however, has not yet been established in the Czech Republic. As this programme is significantly experimental, it is more than desirable that such a special working team with active involvement of politicians should be set up.

Principal recommendations according to the findings made

The evaluator's team suggest the following recommendations on the basis of the surveys made through desk-research, web questionnaire, and structured interviews:

- The content of Action 3 may be characterised as working well and supporting particularly the horizontal mainstreaming (intense co-operation within NTN's, new DP's throughout the individual NTN's). Action 3 is best evaluated by the representatives of the projects accepted in call 4. Yet it is important to put much more emphasis on vertical mainstreaming, and be possibly inspired by how the Slovaks have done it, in establishing a special working team that would be comprised of not only representatives of NTN's, the MA, NSS's and experts, but also political parties at national level. The change in the vertical mainstreaming coordination strategy in spring 2008 may be appraised fairly positively as previous efforts aimed at process coordination at the NTN level were insufficient. In this sense, the MA will be required to carefully monitor, control, and to support the main vertical mainstreaming activities in the final phase of CIP EQUAL execution.
- There are time-related risks in respect of the implementation of the additional projects approved in call 5, and also a risk of a limited factual impact within the mainstreaming principle. It would be necessary, therefore, for NSS and the MA to pay more attention to and intensify collaboration with these projects so that there would be no delays at programme level in quarters 3 and 4 of 2008.
- In other similar ESF-funded programmes it is necessary to put more emphasis on selecting quality project evaluators, who must have perfect knowledge of the overall context of the programme and the given call, to ensure that, in the end, those projects have been selected that address the principal aspects of mainstreaming and dissemination.
- In terms of selection criteria, it is necessary to harmonise the available selection criteria documents and, especially, to specify in more detail the context of each selection criterion and the criteria applied in judging the subject-matter of funding applications. It may be observed there is a considerable discrepancy between the presented selection criteria for Action 3 potential applicants and the unpublished assessment manual for assessors. The evaluator's team is therefore of the opinion that the essence and focus of Action 3 may have not been understood properly in respect of some projects which had been approved. For this reason, the potential project applicants must be provided with precise definitions of the selection criteria applied in the given call in order to ensure transparency in the selecting of the projects to receive support from public funds.

4.8 Evaluation of components of the mainstreaming strategy of DP's

This chapter shall focus on ascertaining what elements and tools constitute the DP mainstreaming strategies and to what extent they focus on activities other than passive dissemination. The following key sub-areas of questions have been selected for elaboration:

- | What tools are used by individual DP when performing horizontal and vertical mainstreaming?
- | What was the focus of the individual tool types with respect to the implementation of individual mainstreaming activities?
- | Are there any specific new elements concerning the performance of horizontal and vertical mainstreaming activities that are not fully used at present?

The purpose of the above questions is to identify the tools of mainstreaming strategies of DP's and to assess their focus. The aim is to define the limits of introducing results into daily practice.

Background of the current progress and development

The methodological manual "Mainstreaming – Manual for Development Partnerships" ranks the lack of interest among politicians and others officials, insufficient communication and communication channel duplicity, badly selected target groups, low comprehensibility level, complexity of shared experience and information, and unverified or undocumented results among the main obstacles of mainstreaming application.

Based on the desk research of available methodical materials of MA, national and international evaluation reports and the methodical materials of the EC relating to the implementation of mainstreaming, we may conclude that within the creation of methodologies for the application of mainstreaming, MA and external contractors have not deviated from the standard approach to the creation and implementation of mainstreaming activities in EU Member States.

Thus, mainstreaming is described as a process divided into four steps:

- | ***Innovation*** (development of new ways of fighting discrimination and inequality);
- | ***Validation*** (validation of new results – whether they represent innovation or not);
- | ***Dissemination*** (dissemination for the purpose of providing information to target groups, using publications, meetings, workshops);
- | ***Transfer*** (new lessons, products, processes that can be used in another or broader context, intended particularly for so-called policy makers).

An analysis of mainstreaming strategies of DP's has shown that approximately one half of DP's have – from the very beginning – planned no extensive and intensive mainstreaming activities. However, there is an apparent focus on dissemination of information concerning products and/or product outputs. Thus, if the mainstreaming is planned, it is mostly on a horizontal level. These activities employ particularly the following elements:

- | Exchange of information between individual DP's and within a DP;
- | Information activities (brochures, leaflets, publications etc.);

- | Educational activities, conferences (both for experts and general public);
- | Co-operation with organisations of the same (similar) type;
- | Publicity and co-operation with media;
- | Websites;
- | E-mail communication.

Another group of DP's has had experience with activities similar to mainstreaming from the past (i.e. with the effort to enforce verified activities in legal regulations, policy of active employment etc.) or they have been developing products being convinced, from the very beginning, about their potential broader impact (increase of social competences of various age and social groups, participation of handicapped persons on the labour market).

Apart from the elements mentioned above, DP's intensely use other elements and tools as well, e.g.:

- | More active participation in the national and international forum;
- | More intense co-operation with individual experts and expert institutions;
- | Advisory and consultancy activities exceeding the training and education of target groups;
- | Communication and consultations with key actors of the decision-making sector (department heads of ministries, members of Parliament, senators, regional representatives, department heads of regional offices and labour offices etc.);
- | More active work within NTN.

Apart from the fact that some DP's could have been more ambitious, we may otherwise conclude, in relation to the form and content, that the standard of mainstreaming strategies of individual (selected) DP's is satisfactory to such an extent that they follow the national mainstreaming strategy and the mainstreaming strategy of the NTN. Mainstreaming strategies of the NTN are however very diversified and the presentation of results shall be more important than their form itself.

Due to the diversification of focus of the NTN, thematic mainstreaming strategies do not have unified structure. Basically, however, they include most of the following items:

- | List of projects covered by the NTN; Focus of the projects, target groups, mainstreaming prospect – product etc.;
- | Evaluation of the starting position in the respective area and of the current state;
- | Proposal of activities of the NTN – common activities and/or a list of individual activities;
- | Target groups (addressees) of the mainstreaming activities.

Generally, it is possible to conclude that the mainstreaming activities are supplemented, both on the basis of ideas and support by the MA and the NSS and by the individual DP's and the common work of the NTN.

Comprehensive information on the mainstreaming activities of individual NTN's are difficult to obtain (some information is included in minutes, presentations, in the strategy itself, in a discussion) and this fact presents a substantial difficulty.

Based on the facts mentioned above and on the analysis of the current mainstreaming strategies it is possible to recommend better planning of such activities by individual DP's both at the beginning of the project (during its preparation and commencement) and during the implementation itself (surprisingly low numbers of DP's have been revising their strategies) and at the final stage itself, where it is necessary to co-operate more intensely and actively with other DP's and other entities (experts, policy makers).

Generally it is possible to recommend that the activities of DP's should include more thematic workshops, seminars, conferences (it is not advisable to perform these activities only for the purpose of the monitoring report) and they should prepare high-quality information on the resulting product.⁹⁴ It is also necessary to focus more on a high-quality visualisation of products (the product must be attractive) and non-traditional forms of presentations (comics, theatre, campaign etc.).

From the point of view of the differences between Prague and the remaining parts of the CR, there are no apparent differences between the mainstreaming strategies. In other words, the DP's have been implementing similar activities in a similar way and the territorial differences have been playing no role.

Due to the reasons stated above and for the purpose of regulating mainstreaming activities, the MA announced partial changes in the process of implementation of the mainstreaming principle at the beginning of 2007 and in 2008, consisting particularly of the following items:⁹⁵

- I Proposal for change in the national mainstreaming strategy so that the objectives and effects of vertical mainstreaming at the programme level are better specified;
- I Support for mainstreaming activities within NTN, mediation of contacts to policy makers, enhancement of activities of MA in the area of publicity;
- I Enhancement of competent partners' involvement in NTN's;
- I More active operations of MA in the coordination group of NTN (representatives of MA, NTN and NSS);
- I More active participation of the monitoring committee, and/or establishment of a mainstreaming group for CIP EQUAL.
- I Long-term involvement of experts in the NTN and more co-ordination of activities of vertical mainstreaming in 2008.

These changes have had positive impact on the activities of individual NTN's and DP's, thus confirming the appropriateness and necessity of this trend, though it has been implemented with a certain delay.

⁹⁴We may utilise the analogy with a business plan – an entrepreneur should have available a ready “lift presentation”, i.e. he/she should be able to convince an investor about the viability of his/her plan while travelling in a lift. How many members of DP's would be able to hold the interest of a policy maker during a 5 minutes' presentation?

⁹⁵See also Kučera, F. (2007)

The interconnection of the activities of Action 3 and Action 2 has proved to be very suitable. The fact that the individual DP's had to develop innovative products and at the same time to plan their dissemination and the promotion of the results in policies at national or regional levels, including the application in common practice, allowed them to set up a more foresighted and realistic way of planning and implementation of individual activities. In the frame below, we provide a summary concerning the issue of parallel Actions 2 and 3.

Parallel Actions 2 and 3

Description of the issue

Action 2 is the main implementation phase of CIP EQUAL. The recipients use it to implement the activities defined in the work programmes of their contracts on national and international co-operation.

Action 3 is an independent phase for the implementation of all projects supported by CIP EQUAL, focusing on the exchange of information obtained within the implementation of the project and elsewhere, by various interested entities.

Options:

- Actions 2 and 3 begin and go on simultaneously (in a parallel way);
- Actions 2 and 3 begin and go on in sequence (in a sequential way);

Advantages and disadvantages of the two options

Option (a)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Require less time	Require more complex project management
More intense relations between project activities and programme	Less systematic structure of documents
Comprehensive project	More demanding administration on part of recipients
	More demanding on part of programme administrator

Option b)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Documents for individual actions are well arranged	Activities within a project are separated
These documents are clear and understandable	Less intense relations between activities
Easier programme co-ordination for the administrator	Require more time
Separation of administration for the recipients	

If the applicants have experience with project management, announcement of both Action 2 and 3 at the same time may be preferred. The quality of project management depends on each and every applicant. The same is valid for certain temporal and factual sequences, which may be utilised during

For instance when developing several products that are logically and temporally interrelated, it is possible to begin dissemination or mainstreaming of the one product, while developing the next one, and to project the experience concerning the results to the dissemination and mainstreaming of other products.

As this manner is less clear and it is quite demanding, as regards the initial setup, it may be deduced that this may be one of the reasons, while e.g. in Portugal and the UK the separation of Actions has been chosen, especially if the temporal aspects are considered as well. While these states have had enough time for the implementation of actions within CIP EQUAL, this was not the case in the CR.

Conclusion

Generally, it is impossible to state clearly that one of the options is better. The selection has to be always done with regard to the specific occasions of a particular programme.

The evaluator's team, however, generally prefers the option which better maintains the project cycle. It is more demanding, as regards the clear content and administration of the programme and the quality of project management by the recipients, on the other hand, however, it provides the recipients with more autonomy when implementing the project, the option to continuously share experience during the implementation of a project as well as e.g. the option to better distribute the dissemination and mainstreaming activities during the whole programme period. The administrator is provided the option to utilise both positive and negative examples/experience and thus it is possible to facilitate a smooth project implementation by other recipients.

Main findings and conclusions

Generally, we can define the following tools used for the implementation of the mainstreaming principle at the DP level, which will be evaluated from the perspective of actual application and the level of their efficiency:

- ***Involvement of the strategic partner in vertical mainstreaming*** (i.e. organisation able to ensure vertical mainstreaming due to its experience and contacts). This effort is apparent especially on the level of NTN, though some DP's have made independent attempts as well. This mechanism is successfully utilised only gradually and it depends on personal experience. Activities in this area have become more intense, on the part of MA and NSS, as well as NTN and individual DP's. During this evaluation, the MA began to play a role helping the DP's contact the appropriate policy makers.
- ***Organisation of mainstreaming events*** (e.g. conferences, workshops, seminars). At present, this activity shows very positive responses and it is possible to state that it has become mastered and that it is efficiently exploited by both the MA and the individual NTN's. Moreover it is possible to state that this area is the least problematic one, although some problems may be found here as well (some DP's have planned activities that do not seem to be so important and efficient from today's perspective, these activities become concentrated, as most DP's have planned them for the very end of the project).
- ***Active participation in NTN*** (contact with policy makers and prospective users). In 2007, a significant improvement in this area can be detected, as the NTN's demonstrated a high functionality, especially with regard to the participation of

individual DP's. Problems with mediation and involvement of policy makers in the activities of individual NTN's have, however, persisted.

- ***Involvement of representatives of the academic and research sector, social partners, particularly the representatives of employers and trade unions in the activities of NTN.*** This area shows very uneven results, as about half of the NTN's succeeded in involving the relevant entities in their activities. The question, how to involve these representatives more intensely in the activities of individual NTN's, has been dealt with during the whole operational period of NTN.
- ***Organisation of exchanges among individual DP's, social partners and representatives of significant public domains*** (horizontal mainstreaming). Utilisation of this mechanism is related to the increased activity when preparing mainstreaming activities of individual DP's and it is possible to state that based on natural needs specific purpose platforms started to appear, especially between individual DP's for the purpose of validation and other mainstreaming activities.
- ***Consultations with experts*** who are able to transfer experience into a political context. This activity took place partly in an organised manner, within some NTN's which succeeded in addressing the experts, and partly individually in some DP's. At present, the process of vertical mainstreaming is co-ordinated by the MA at the level of programme.
- ***Provision of information and involvement of a target group in the activities of DP on an ongoing basis.*** Based on the achieved results, this part has been performed very well.

Within the evaluation of the mainstreaming strategy at the level of DP's, the relevancy, integrity, feasibility and sustainability of some sub-components has been assessed, possibly including the following items:

- Relevancy level of the current version of the National mainstreaming strategy of CIP EQUAL from the perspective of DP's needs – in the case of most DP's, the strategy has been found as suitable, though it appeared rather late.
- Availability of methodology and details for mainstreaming taken from the level of the programme– - This fact has also been mostly considered as sufficient, with the same delay as in the case of the strategy.
- Substantial differences in understanding innovations – The interviews have shown that some partnership understand innovation basically as any improvement within the existence of the DP itself or even only as an activity of DP's members and/or as an improvement of situation within a particular region. Changes, that could be considered as innovations at the national or European context, shall be very rare. Products which attempt at a certain integration or complexity in a particular area (e.g. the project "Competences for the labour market", recipient RPIC – ViP s. r. o.) may have a more significant potential.

Results of horizontal mainstreaming through DP and NTN may be summarised as follows:

- Establishment of active co-operation with DP's dealing with similar issues;

- Coordination of addressing politicians, important officials and other persons with decision-making authority, working together with other projects with a view to enhance the desired effect;
- Ongoing modifications of procedures and strategies of individual DP's based on co-operation with other DP's;
- Acquisition of important stimuli for improvement and enrichment of own activities;
- Utilisation of NTN's for the purpose of contacting other DP's;
- Evaluation of innovative outcomes and examples of good practice acquired by the DP within NTN;
- Utilisation of NTN's for the purpose of creating personal contacts with other DP's dealing with similar issues;
- Using a supplementary call for Action 3 during 2007, some new DP's could be created, across the present DP's, to support the horizontal mainstreaming.

Results of vertical mainstreaming through DP and NTN may be summarised as follows:

- Individual DP's relied particularly on activities and acts of NTN; in 2008, the MA increased the level of its activities within a co-ordinated vertical mainstreaming.
- To a certain extent, the political actors have begun to be influenced towards the utilisation of project results to form particular changes and better arrangements of the respective policies, but its impact can be demonstrated in a longer perspective only. At present, we may only state that the progress has been achieved and contacts have become more intense.
- Some DP's are addressed and get involved in activities at regional level (participation in the development of methodology, regional strategies in particular areas, sharing experience with project management with schools and non-profit entities).
- DP's (in some cases in co-operation with other DP's of the same specialisation) are discussing with other regions about the possibilities of using the results (the developed products) in the respective regions.
- Better promotion of ideas and outcomes of DP's with target groups through NTN's.
- The problem of some DP's concerning the vertical mainstreaming targeted at national level results from the fact, that the project itself does not have substantial ambitions exceeding a specific region and sometimes there is no apparent effort to apply the outcomes in a more general manner even within a particular region (e.g. in region's strategic documents).

In relation to the mainstreaming activities, the following conclusions have been confirmed by questionnaires and follow-up investigations:

- The key is to plan the mainstreaming activities at the very beginning of the project implementation, i.e. in the preparatory phase, because three quarters of respondents used them as a basis.

- The most frequent activities in a material form include educational modules, teaching materials, publications and methodologies. As regards the non-material form, there are seminars, workshops and consultations (the respective public authorities, universities, economic chamber, etc.).
- The less utilised activities included: lobbying, participation in the development of strategic documents and in the least extent the participation in commenting proceedings.
- A surprisingly large amount of respondents answered that the outcomes of their project appeared in a relatively satisfactory form in a political and/or strategic document at the national level (more than a quarter of respondents). Here, it is necessary to state that this is a statement of the representatives of the DP's, which, however, does not correspond with the findings of the evaluation of the impact of CIP EQUAL performed so far. More detailed analysis concerning this issue can be found in the chapter on the evaluation of the currently available impacts at the level of the Czech Republic. At the regional level, quite a large group of respondents believes that the impacts are sufficiently apparent or distinctly apparent (one quarter of respondents), the same number, however, believes that they have had no impact or just a little one. In the area of mainstreaming, this issue belongs among the most complex ones, for within the evaluation of the impact of CIP EQUAL it has not yet been possible to prove any significant impact of the outcomes of DP's projects. Other managed interviews have confirmed that most DP's are rather optimistic in this regard (probably due to the awareness of the significance of mainstreaming within the CIP EQUAL). Regarding the ongoing evaluation of products and completion of projects of individual DP's we may only conclude, that the current outcomes within strategic documents cannot be considered as sufficient. On one hand, it is caused by the fact that projects of many DP's did not have such ambitions from the very beginning, and on the other hand by the fact that the development of strategic documents presents a complex procedure, where a mere invitation in working groups or a promotion of text in draft versions of documents does not automatically mean their adoption by the respective authorities.
- Moreover, DP's assess the impact of project outcomes on the development of non-commercial product as quite good (nearly two thirds of respondents).

Recommendations

- When selecting projects, it is necessary to pay sufficient attention to their correct targeting and clear definition of specific products, so that at least the objectives of programmes funded by ESF can be achieved, including the context of the implementation of the mainstreaming principle.
- To improve the setting of communication mechanisms between MA, NSS and the heads of individual NTN's for a more active promotion of vertical mainstreaming (e.g. to discuss and define specific tasks for the MA, NSS and heads of individual NTN's based on a written set of requirements of individual NTN's).

- In the case of the DP's that try to arrange their vertical mainstreaming by themselves, it is possible to arrange an individual meeting and to discuss the possible help by the MA (e.g. in the form of minutes).
- At present, DP's can have problems with the implementation of the mainstreaming activities, as most of them planned these activities to the very end of the project and therefore now there is an apparent decrease of its overall impact on the promotion in practice or inclusion in legislation and policies – even in the case of co-ordinated vertical mainstreaming. This decrease of impact could be eliminated by a gradual development of targeted and long-term lobbying.
- In case of some DP's, the respective issue has been published in press, but this form of publication has not been recognised due to the non-observance of the publicity regulations – though in the case of this type of publication it is irrational. Due publicity in accordance with regulations may be achieved only by paying for an advertisement – but it decreases the effectiveness of such information. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between advertisements showing information on a specific activity (e.g. an educational course) which are therefore targeted at specific target groups, and PR articles promoting the main idea of the project and its contributions. Therefore, such an activity should be recognised.

4.9 National Thematic Networks

4.9.1 Concept of establishing NTN and its operation

National thematic networks are conceived fully in accordance with the thematic approach. They cover all the priority areas, whereas the DP are permanent members of NTN. Six NTN have been established in the CR. Each NTN has its chairman, who is always a person respected in his/her area of expertise. Division into individual NTN's has been carried out based on individual thematic groups. DP's have had the opportunity to change the NTN they belong to, and/or to decide whether they belong to more than one network.

The concept of work and activities of NTN is described in the Handbook of NTN's, which is available on the web (www.equalcr.cz). Moreover, under the tab "Thematic networks" these webpages describe the individual NTN's, their mainstreaming strategies, there is also an introductory document for each NTN, including a description of approach to the mainstreaming, and invitations to and minutes from individual meetings.

Three individual reports on the implementation of the national mainstreaming strategy issued in 2007 may be mentioned as a valuable source for the evaluation of the achieved progress within the individual NTN's. Although a substantial part of data reproduced in them is repeated in each of them, they show concisely the progress in the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy within the individual NTN's, as well as the number of meetings, the membership structure, changes of strategies, international activities, outputs from the meetings and other relevant facts (monitoring, actions).

Reports on the activities of the national support structure, prepared regularly by the NSS, represent another important resource for assessing the activities of the NTN's.

Types of organisations represented in the NTN

From the typological point of view, it is hard to select a definite methodology allowing the performance of such an analysis under the conditions prevailing in the CR.

Two basic possibilities of classification are available:

- According to legal personality (company, civil association, generally beneficial company, state and its organisational entities, regions, municipalities, etc.);
- According to factual specialisation of individual organisations (education, consultancy, charity, public administration).

As the NTN's have a factual focus, the latter criterion has been selected, for it is not merely statistical and formal, like the former. Nevertheless, the criterion of legal personality has been used for more detailed classification.

Based on this classification, NTN's include:

- Educational and consultancy organisations operating either on a commercial basis (or partly on a commercial basis) – these are mostly limited liability companies, while such an education and consultancy is provided by a substantial part of the non-profit sector as well (either as a main or supplementary activity). From the point of view of involvement in the NTN's, they usually represent heads of DP's or members of DP's.
- Charity organisations focusing primarily on specific social problems, supplementing such main activities by e.g. consultancy or educational services. They usually belong to the non-profit sector (civil associations, generally beneficial companies). These organisations belong mostly to heads or members of DP's.
- Unions and chambers established by valid legislation or those, whose role is defined by valid legislation. Quite often, they are the so-called social partners (CMCTU, Economic chamber, Association of Czech and Moravian Production Cooperatives, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic). They often represent specific lobbying organisations, which pursue their own objectives and interests. They can be utilised during the evaluation, dissemination and vertical mainstreaming). They may have the role of a member of a DP.
- Schools and school facilities, mostly in the role of implementers and/or partners within a DP; also as an institution providing experts. They may help with the evaluation and dissemination as well.
- Subsidised organisations, mostly those belonging to the state administration. They are mostly expert workplaces offering experts, expert opinions as well as a certain help in the area of evaluation, dissemination and mainstreaming.
- State administration and/or state organisational units. They include especially ministries and labour offices. The main contribution of these representatives consists in the expertise in the respective area, in the dissemination and vertical mainstreaming.
- Municipal administration, and/or its members have been participating mainly in the roles of partners, but they can be used for the purpose of dissemination and vertical mainstreaming too.

- Natural persons have been participating in the NTN's in the role of experts. They can help during the evaluation, dissemination and mainstreaming.

Especially two groups of persons may be identified as representatives of these organisations (according to their positions): managers and/or heads of the respective units and project managers and/or officers. The chairmen of the NTN's were mostly managers and/or heads of units, members of the NTN's were mostly project managers and officers.

As the effectiveness of NTN depends on the composition and the extent of involvement of individual members (especially the external ones), the problems of the operation of NTN's included the areas specified below. The evaluating team supplemented them by comments related to the development during 2007 and the first half of 2008:

- I Participation and involvement of the representatives of policy makers in the work of NTN. Unfortunately, this deficiency characterised by a low participation has been apparent from the very beginning of the establishment of NTN and its elimination has only been partially successful. Based on experience e.g. from the UK, these makers should become involved gradually and for the long term.
- I Working transfer of information. This area has been characterised by a number of important changes. Thanks to the organisation of seminars, workshops, help line, development of better methodological aids and regular activities of NTN's, the DP's do not consider this area as an essential problem or an obstacle for their activities.
- I Regular participation of designated external members in the meetings of NTN. E.g. the Report on the implementation of the national mainstreaming strategy for the period April-June, as mentioned above, mentions the following: *"It is particularly important that the MA should implement specific measures to inform MoLSA that the participation of MoLSA representatives is not quite sufficient in the case of some NTN's. We have to conclude, however, that our experience show that this step shall have no significant success, as the main reason for participation of experts is the personal/professional interest concerning the respective issues, which cannot be developed by an issuance of an order."*
- I No remunerated experts were among the members of NTN's. A change of system has been implemented (remuneration for activities has been enforced) – it was accepted in a very positive manner, as the motivation for an involvement in the activities of NTN's has been increased. The report on the implementation of the National mainstreaming strategy for the period from January to March 2007 mentions, that it is important to involve external staff in the evaluation and validation of innovations and good practice, where the hired experts should be experts on a particular field, and in the area of compiling a database of contacts relevant for a particular area and in relation to those DPs' outcomes, which should be mainstreamed.

Thematic networks allow the participation of all important partners involved in a DP. The level of their involvement depends, however, on the managing organisation and on the willingness of the important partners. NTN's have members who are not represented in DP's – they are however mostly personnel of public authorities or persons connected with public authorities. There is the persisting lack of representatives from the academic area, research organisations and social partners, particularly the representatives of employers and trade

unions. In this area, only a slight progress has been recorded in comparison with the previous evaluating report.

Main findings and conclusions

The issue of establishment, role and organisation of NTN is basically a descriptive one and it is really not a problem to evaluate all the relevant aspects of this issue, particularly after an analysis of the respective reports and evaluation of results of the questionnaire investigation, with regard to the minutes from the meetings of the individual NTN's.

After the start of NTN's and their coordination by NSS they became a useful platform for information sharing and creation of thematic sub-groups, where e.g. a common action in the area of dissemination and mainstreaming was arranged. It was also important, that the individual members of NTN were under a certain pressure (necessity to present results, meet schedule). The involvement of experts and preparation of validation were important as well. It is interesting that the NTN's that show the largest number of mainstreaming activities at the level of their DP's (i.e. particularly the larger NTN's in their size and also thematically less defined) are characterised often by a quite weak level of activities, including the involvement of experts, at the level of NTN as a whole and vice versa. The possible explanations of this phenomenon include: Negative influence of large size of thematic focusion, Reciprocal proportion between the efficiency of co-operation in NTN and the number of DP's in NTN, where the small networks can co-operate on common tasks in an easier and more efficient manner, as well as potential possibility of certain mutual competition of individual DP's within NTN, where – in the larger NTN's has a possible role also a rivalry among DPs, respectively, an effort of DPs to stress their own aim or focusion. This phenomenon should be evaluated in detail in the final report, when complete data for all the activities of individual NTN's shall be available.

Overall evaluation of the work of NTN's can be summarised as follows:

- Operational structure of NTN from the point of view of needs of DP's is mostly satisfactory, the level of involvement of MA and other experts being improved. In this regard, however, it is necessary to mention that the situation in individual NTN's is quite heterogeneous.
- Operation of NTN from the perspective of possibilities to influence the policy makers and/or legislation creation. This aspect is still considered as one of most important weaknesses in the operation of NTN.
- Possibility to study outcomes of other DP's within NTN and experience sharing. At the moment, they are considered as one of the most important contributions of the operation of NTN, as the functionality of NTN allows a more intense co-operation of DP's with similar focus, developing better and more efficient form of co-operation and support, utilisation of synergic effects and receipt of feedback.
- Better involvement of experts and more common activities usually characterise the NTN's with a more specialised focus (e.g. the NTN F, E and C) in comparison with the larger and less specialised ones (e.g. the NTN A and D). In a thematic more defined NTS it is usually NTN with less members (NTN F and E), but they could involve also relatively smaller ones (NTN C).

Thematically less defined NTN are regularly bigger in their size (e.g. NTN A and D).

From the point of view of functionality of individual NTN's we may state the following:

- **NTN A – Improvement of access and return to the labour market for persons with integration difficulties.** This group organised 8 working meetings (as of June 2008), it has its own mainstreaming strategy. As regards the representation of experts, it may be formally considered as sufficient, but their actual activities (see the minutes) and participation of these experts do not correspond with it. While the representatives of DP's participate in virtually 100 % of meetings, experts have a considerably lower rate (about 30–50 %).
- **NTN B – Process of establishing businesses and development of individual entrepreneurship.** This group organised 8 working meetings too (as of June 2008) and it also has its own mainstreaming strategy. The situation regarding the composition, however, is significantly worse in this group. Even the DP's themselves are often absent at the meetings. As regards the involvement of experts, it is highly volatile and there is virtually no continuity. The participation of experts is quite alarming as well.
- **NTN C – Enhancement of social economy, particularly community services.** This group organised 12 working meetings (as of June 2008), it has its own mainstreaming strategy. As regards the representation of experts, it may be formally considered as sufficient, but their actual activities (see the minutes) and participation of these experts do not correspond with it. While the representatives of DP's participate in virtually 100 % of meetings, the participation of experts is highly fluctuating (sometimes it amounts to 100 % next time it is 30 %). It is interesting, that the group invites also guests from relevant practice for the meetings.
- **NTN D – Support for adaptability and life-long learning.** This group organised 6 working meetings (as of June 2008) and it has also its own mainstreaming strategy. As regards the involvement of experts, it may be – from the formal point of view – considered as sufficient. The representatives of DP's participate in virtually 100 % of meetings, the participation of experts is highly fluctuating (sometimes it amounts to 100 % next time it is 30 %). The NTN D is composed from many DP's with differing target groups. Therefore it is very difficult to set up a common co-operation. Thus the members of the NTN decided to create sub-groups of DP's focusing on similar target groups so that they can plan joint mainstreaming activities and working meetings.
- **NTN E – Equal opportunities of women and men.** This group organised 8 working meetings (as of June 2008) and it has also its own mainstreaming strategy. Apart from that, it has already developed the Evaluation of mainstreaming strategy NTN E, presenting a summary of the relation of these two documents, and further summarising the fulfilment of the mainstreaming strategy, outcomes and utilisation of activities and final recommendations. As regards the involvement of experts, it may be – from the formal point of view – considered as sufficient. The

representatives of DP's participate in virtually 100 % of meetings, the participation of experts is highly fluctuating (sometimes it amounts to 100 % next time it is 0 %).

- **NTN F – Integration on the labour market, as regards foreigners and persons endangered by race hatred.** This group organised 10 working meetings (as of June 2008) and it has also its own mainstreaming strategy. Apart from that, it has already developed the Evaluation of mainstreaming strategy NTN F, presenting a summary of the relation of these two documents, and further summarising the fulfilment of the mainstreaming strategy, outcomes and utilisation of activities and final recommendations. As regards the involvement of experts, it may be – from the formal point of view – considered as sufficient. As this group is a small one, it is quite sensitive to the insufficient participation. The participation of the representatives of DP's is not so abundant as is the case of other NTN's (unfortunately the minutes after the 7th meeting have not been available) and the participation of experts is similar (highly fluctuating).
- **Cross-sectional group NTN – Integration of persons from socially excluded locations.** This group was created temporarily for the occasion of the annual conference CIP EQUAL 2007, where it organised its own workshop. This NTN is specific by the lack of any prepared mainstreaming strategy. Generally, it followed from the fact, that the DP's taking part in this NTN have their focus included in the strategies of NTN's where they participate primarily. The issue of integration of persons from socially excluded locations is considered as an important issue of the whole society, with cross-sectional characteristics.

During the activities of individual NTN's, their members were changing (including a chairman), supplemented by new members (e.g. experts), designated members were substituted. This phenomenon does not contribute to stability and continuity in the transfer of information and experience in individual DP's. Although some NTN's succeeded in designating experts from practice, it was just a marginal matter. More experts have come from the public authorities (particularly from ministries).

As regards the utilisation of specific information obtained by the representatives of organisations involved in NTN, a clear conclusion cannot be adopted. Based on the interviews, we may only conclude that:

- In the case of the representatives of individual DP's, the transfer of information from the meeting was quite often very substantial, as it usually concerned the experience obtained from other DP's, preparation of evaluations, disseminations, mainstreaming, participation in conferences. There were, however, also DP's which did not participate actively in the activities of NTN and they did not reflect the information from the NTN as well.
- As regards the representatives of the state administration, there was a frequent alternation of specific members and therefore it is possible to assume that the information transfer (if any) was rather formal.
- Representatives of associations and chambers follow their long-term objectives and they

are able to analyse and utilise the obtained information for their subsequent activities.

It is possible to conclude that efficient sharing and utilisation of information within individual NTN's was prevailing. This is apparent from the minutes of individual NTN's, managed interviews as well as from specific outcomes of individual NTN's and DP's (product evaluation, dissemination activities, experience sharing, mainstreaming).

From the point of view of the delimitation of activities of NTN's related to the territory of the City of Prague and the other parts of the Czech Republic, the results have shown that the concentration of MA and NSS in Prague attracts other relevant activities as well. Meetings of NTN's took place in the seat of the NSS, a large share of common activities (meetings, conferences, seminars) took place in Prague. On the other hand, especially the experience exchange between individual DP's and the dissemination and horizontal mainstreaming activities took place following the territorial definition of the individual DP's.

As regards the eligible costs and the coming programmes for the period of 2007–2013, it is certainly possible to consider the necessity to establish an office in Prague, in case of out-of-Prague recipients, the necessity to perform a larger amount of business trips (in comparison with the recipients from Prague) and the easier networking of entities in Prague.

Eight NTN's have been created in the United Kingdom. Each DP participates in the activities of NTN. Policy makers belong among members of NTN (individuals and organisations) and they can help with the mainstreaming principle. Each NTN has its own chairman, usually a policy maker active in central government for a long time.

Recommendations

- To check whether all the NTN's are preparing their own Evaluation of mainstreaming strategy for their particular NTN (according to the available information, two NTN's have prepared it). This check should support the evaluation of the ongoing activities of NTN and particularly the possibilities of the evaluation of the diversity in the focus of individual NTN's.
- The MA and NSS should co-ordinate formal closure of NTN (to issue an instruction) and to request a final report on the activities of NTN in a unified structure.
- The MA should consider how to utilise these groups and organisational system in the future, including the optional continuation and follow-up of the activities performed so far and the utilisation of the possibilities, particularly when implementing programmes funded by ESF during the period of 2007–2013 and in further promotion of results in policies and practice (for other programmes and activities, as e.g. individual projects of the OP HRE).
- The following manners of participation may be proposed for the involvement of the relevant policy makers:
 - In the case of activities that can be financially remunerated, it is necessary to define the manner and limits for such remuneration (as regards the external experts, representatives of academic sector, consultants).

- In case of activities that cannot be directly financially remunerated, non-financial benefits may be considered and the tasks performed within NTN should be defined as a part of their regular work (especially in case of the representatives of public authorities and local authorities, politicians etc.). Meetings in a pleasant environment, high-quality administration services, off-site meetings (including the teambuilding activities), collective lunches after the meetings etc. may be considered as non-financial benefits. Individual members may be motivated by defining their tasks in such a manner that the work in NTN shall be a part of their working objectives and their manager shall evaluate such an objective (e.g. by inquiring the chairman of the NTN) and provide the respective person with remuneration based on the fulfilment of these tasks. Another option is to provide the NTN with financial resources for lobbying and to include influencing of the respective policy makers in the range of tasks of the person performing the lobbying.

4.9.2 NTN efficiency within the framework of fulfilling their tasks

The factors influencing the fulfilment of individual tasks of NTN's include:

- I Quite late start of NTN;
- I Low number of NTN meetings, which – however – increased in 2007 and 2008;
- I Insufficient involvement of relevant structures of public administration;
- I Non-existence of minutes of the NTN meetings, which are published with a certain delay;
- I Low activity of some DP's;
- I Non-existence of workgroups within NTN's.

Analysis of documents of NTN and the subsequent investigation can confirm the significant shift in the operation of individual NTN's. After the initial slow start, it is now clear that the NTN has become an efficient platform for the fulfilment of tasks required from NTN's within the CIP EQUAL and those required by the MA. On the other hand it is necessary to keep in mind, what environment the NTN's perform their activities (it is impossible to expect that one element of the system shall be different from the others).

The fulfilment of tasks within individual NTN's has been gradually improving – it is apparent from both the minutes and the responses to questionnaires. Another important step for eliminating information noise and enhancement of efficiency of operation of individual NTN's was the organisation of regular (no less than twice a year) meetings of all chairpersons of NTN's, representatives of MA dealing with the mainstreaming, representatives of NSS and other stakeholders. These meetings attempt at elimination of duplicity in the mainstreaming activities, targeting particularly the politicians within the vertical mainstreaming. At the same time, these meetings shall make the communication between the individual NTN's more efficient. These expectations have been mostly fulfilled. Certain reservations can be related to the manner of information transfer from these meetings to the individual DP's and to a certain passive participation of some DP's in NTN, which did not sufficiently reflect their activities within NTN. For an unambiguous impact of

such an activity, a more detailed definition of procedures and objectives of the Co-ordination Committee of the NTN may be recommended, so that it is possible to monitor the fulfilment of its conclusions (minutes, monitoring of tasks, etc.).

In the UK, the chairpersons of the NTN's are meeting together in a formal manner twice a year. Such meetings focus on the activities performed by individual NTN's and on specific topics like the development of mainstreaming strategy, networking, dissemination or mainstreaming. Other meetings are organised following current needs.

Slovak chairpersons of NTN's are chosen among experts from practice (non-profit or business sector and/or from the public administration). Meetings of chairpersons have not been formalised.

The Czech NTN's have been fulfilling particularly the following tasks:

- I Dealing with formal matters related to activities of individual NTN's. Preparation of written documents (invitations, minutes) and the approval of the rules of procedure belongs among them as well.
- I Fulfilment of the mainstreaming principle. It particularly concerned the National mainstreaming strategy followed by the development of partial mainstreaming strategy for each NTN and their upgrades. Monitoring of individual mainstreaming activities. Some NTN's have been already evaluating the fulfilment of this strategy using a written report.
- I Provision of information by MA, NTN and/or other stakeholders and of information concerning the development within the EQUAL initiative at national and European levels;
- I Platform for the development of DP's "partnership", where thematically similar projects were dealt with;
- I Exchange of experience in the implementation of individual projects;
- I Preparation for the validation of product and the related consultancy and co-ordination of procedure;
- I Organisation of conferences and seminars within individual NTN's;
- I Publishing publications and brochures (e.g. examples of good practice);
- I Transfer of information in the top-down direction (from the MA, NSS, meeting of the chairpersons of NTN's) and in the down-top direction (from individual DP's at the meetings of chairpersons, to the NSS and MA);
- I Selection of products of NTN's to the database of EC for the mainstreaming of CIP EQUAL products at the level of EU;
- I Participation in European thematic networks and/or mainstreaming platforms (representatives of all NTN's with a single exception participated in the activities of the respective thematic platforms and some of them belonged amongst the presenters (e.g. the NTN D, NTN F a NTN A).

NTN in Great Britain

NTN's in Great Britain are fulfilling these tasks:

- | Fulfilment of strategic objectives of each NTN (according to its specialisation);
- | Development of strategic documents (particularly the thematic mainstreaming plan);
- | Support for DP's within the support of the mainstreaming strategy;
- | Dissemination of good practice (its identification with the potential for mainstreaming);
- | Development of efficient network of entities;
- | Development of dissemination strategy;
- | Own mainstreaming for each NTN, including efficient dialogue between those, who prepare the activities and implement them (recipients), and those, who develop the respective policies;
- | Participation in European thematic networks;
- | Help during the development of case studies.

NTN in Slovakia

In Slovakia, NTN fulfils the following tasks:

- | It develops thematic mainstreaming strategies.
- | It helps the DP's to employ a broader, strategic perspective on the area of its activities and the context of national policies.
- | It facilitates meetings and experience exchange by the DP's.
- | It helps to co-ordinate the co-operation within a thematic area and provides key information to the MA and NSS.
- | It analyses the projects of the DP's and identifies the main priorities and necessary activities for the fulfilment of the objectives of Action 3.
- | It helps to identify the so-called examples of best practices and articulates recommendations for their further utilisation in practice.
- | It participates in proposing procedures for the improvement of the current political strategies and concepts.
- | It co-operates on dissemination activities.
- | It informs the members of the NTN, other DP's and the general public about its activities and results of work.
- | It co-operates on cross-sectional topics with other NTN's.
- | It supports a general publicity and provision of information about CIP EQUAL.

Comparison of the tasks of NTN in the CR, UK and in Slovakia

The similarity of tasks of NTN in the three countries is not a surprise. This fact results from the general characteristics of CIP EQUAL as a programme and/or the Community initiative.

Other similarity results from the fact that the CR and Slovakia (due to the date of accession to the EU) started these programmes later and therefore they found some inspiration from abroad.

In Great Britain, there is an emphasis on the help in the development of information on high-quality products, so that they can be presented to policy makers in due time, in a concentrated and usable form. For this purpose, several materials are developed, which are very synoptic and characterised by easy orientation. Further there is an emphasis on networking, examples of good practice and European dimension. The main role of NTN is to create a certain bridge between individual DP's and policy makers. NTN's have to reconcile the demand (politicians and civil servants) and the supply (individual DP's with their products). As Great Britain is generally a de-centralised country (from the point of view of public administration), the decentralisation is projected in the concept of the NTN as well, which is not a superior directive authority, as it is in the CR and even more in Slovakia. It is a sort of advisory board, which the DP's have to obtain by their results. The main advantage of NTN in Great Britain, however, consists in the fact that they started to implement mainstreaming in 2005-2006, before it was possible in the CR or in Slovakia. In Great Britain, some groups are more active than others as like elsewhere. Some NTN's did not succeed in achieving sufficient networking of DP's and their activation within the work of the NTN.

The above mentioned facts show that in the CR, the NTN's started to operate quite recently, but based on a relative comparison, they do not run behind as regards the intensity, content, and outcomes (results achieved in a temporal unit). The situation in Great Britain is better, especially due to the following:

- More experience of entities with the project implementation, both from the general and European perspective.
- High-quality operation of NSS, which from the very beginning operated in the system of CIP EQUAL.
- Longer existence of the CIP EQUAL programme.

In comparison with Slovakia, the operation and effectiveness of NTN is very similar. Differences can be found particularly in the method of meetings of NTN's (in the CR, they are more frequent and less formal), in the manner of coordination (in the CR, there are meetings of the chairpersons of NTN's) and in the relationship to the NSS (in the CR, it is a private entity). Involvement of the NTN in international co-operation (the European dimension) cannot be considered as sufficient in Slovakia.

Main findings and conclusions

In relation to the evaluation of the efficiency of operations of NTN's, the increase in the number of meetings of individual NTN's and the agenda should be mentioned as a mark of progress in comparison with the conclusions in the Final report of the second stage of the ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL (EURO SERVICE GROUP 2006).

Based on the managed interviews that have been carried out, the problem of communication and fulfilment of tasks within NTN can be divided into two groups of approximately the same size:

- The DP's that do not see any own benefits in activities and operation and therefore they

are not involved (they have another type of project, they implement different activities, their methods of mainstreaming are different).

- The second group does not participate in the meetings of NTN's without any serious reasons and thus it is apparent that they do not trace the outcomes either.

Disregarding all the presented problems, the effectiveness of NTN's and their operation may be evaluated positively.

4.9.3 Factors influencing the operation of NTN's

Based on the facts mentioned above and the results of the performed investigations it may be concluded, that the potential of NTN's in the mainstreaming process has not been utilised in a sufficient manner, due to the certain lack of experience of all stakeholders, to the absence of a more significant expert co-ordination of operation and activities of some NTN's, e.g. by active involvement of some external experts in the role of expert guarantee (e.g. the NTN D, A, B), due to the administration capacity of the MA, which was not sufficient at the beginning, the non-existence of relevant documents for the work of NTN's, the unclear relationship between the DP's and NTN,⁹⁶ as well as the composition and scope of NTN.⁹⁷

Main findings and conclusions

The report on the implementation of the national mainstreaming strategy rightfully repeats in its findings, that *"...it is possible to clearly state that as of today, the most valuable outcome of the NTN is the improved co-operation of the individual development partnerships. Information is transferred between the DP's, co-operation is established, contacts are shared and the outcomes are co-ordinated and mutually commented, i.e. the so-called "peer reviewing".* Moreover, joint activities are planned in relation to influencing and informing the public – both the general public and the experts with an impact on changes in the area of legislation. Individual networks work on the publicity options of their networks, e.g. by creating joint websites or publications describing the activities of the NTN, with the characterisation of projects and their common mainstreaming strategy, joint conferences and seminars.

Table 38: SWOT analysis of factors influencing the operation of the NTN

NTN strengths:

- Relatively identical common interest during the implementation of projects within EQUAL (fulfilment of basic principles of the

NTN opportunities:

- Influence of the policy/strategy making at national and European levels;
- Promotion of interesting products;

⁹⁶I.e. a clear definition of the mission of NTN. Distribution of competences between NTN and DP (what is the responsibility of each DP, where a support by NTN can be expected, where it is possible to rely mostly or solely on the NTN).

⁹⁷E.g. the thematically heterogeneous NTN's have caused that some DP's worked within the NTN only formally, without taking active part in their activities. The networking potential within a NTN has not been utilised (as it is proved by the fact that in some places, a more narrow co-operation in the area of mainstreaming took place – joint activities, information sharing). The more intense participation of external experts could facilitate the activities of the DP's as well. Last but not least, an involvement of a professional lobbying person could significantly shift the implementation of the mainstreaming.

EQUAL initiative);

- High level of involvement of the representatives of the DP's;
- Attempts at co-operation;
- Attempts at obtaining contacts to other DP's and exchanging experience;
- Attempts at obtaining contact on policy makers.

- Establishment of a lobbying group.

NTN weaknesses:

- Unclear and/or heterogeneous structure of NTN;
- Lack of interest of some DP's;
- Insufficient experience with the project implementation within the EQUAL;
- Insufficient participation by the MA at the beginning of the operation of NTN;
- Low rate of the involvement of experts;
- Insignificant participation of policy makers.

NTN threats:

- Unclear idea on the manner of operation of the EQUAL initiative by the EC and MA;
- The respective methodologies and instructions for work shall not be ready in time;
- Problem with funding by the MA.

The questionnaire investigation has revealed, that the acceptance of rules has proved to be useful or has proved to be very useful (76 %); 83 % of respondents consider the distribution of competences within NTN as positive, 68 % of respondents appreciate the simplified methods of communication, 89 % of respondents appreciate the availability of the minutes from meetings and 94 % of respondents appreciate the distribution of information.

Based on the analysis of NTN in Great Britain, the following factors facilitating the activities of NTN's have been identified:

- Longer period for the implementation of activities within CIP EQUAL;
- High-quality NSS from the very beginning of operation of NTN;
- Clearly defined tasks and outcomes of NTN;
- When the NTN began to operate, all relevant documents concerning its activities were available;
- More experiences with lobbying generally and with the importance of mainstreaming at all levels;
- More experience of individual DP's with project management and international co-operation.

On the other hand, however, the following problems concerning the operation of the NTN have been identified:

- Uneven involvement of individual DP's within NTN;
- Some NTN's have shown more activity and better results than the others;

- Problem with the vertical mainstreaming (meetings with relevant entities, promotion of specific measures).

The comparison of problems of NTN's in the CR and Great Britain shows that some problems are identical and they occur even in established structures (activity of individual DP's and NTN's, problems with vertical mainstreaming), others may be eliminated with the help of experience, motivation and time (selection of NSS, definition of clear rules at the very beginning, high-quality supporting documents, better contacts to policy makers).

Specific summary for the CR, if utilising NTN and/or similar structures in the future:

- To define clear objectives and authorities of NTN;
- At the beginning, to devote more time to setting up the structure of NTN (What are the relevant groups for participation? What sort of administration services should be provided? What are the deadlines for outcomes? What should be the form of the outcomes? What sort of vertical and horizontal communication should be used?);
- The MA has to define sufficient financial resources to a high-quality operation of NTN – hiring experts, lobbying, ordering studies, printing brochures etc.
- At the beginning, the MA has to select and set up a clear relationship with NSS (as it is then projected to the operation of NTN).
- To emphasise the high-quality outcomes from the NTN then to deal with procedural and formal matters;
- To allow a more intense international involvement of the members of NTN;
- “Less” may sometimes be a plus (the number of workshops, conferences and courses is not important, while the resulting product and its application is important);
- To secure a financial bonus for exceptionally successful products (both at the national and international levels) and to encourage and support success in other activities.

4.10 Good practice evaluation and validation mechanisms

Factors conditioning the validation of good practice in the CR

Since the last quarter of 2007, the validation of products created within the CIP EQUAL has been taking place. The DP's adopted steps and selected their products and initiated their validation using procedures defined in the methodology for product validation dated June 2007.⁹⁸

The mainstreaming shows the validation of good practice even more clearly, that the DP's were in the first half of 2008 in a stage, when they were completing the product validation and the mainstreaming phase had already started for them. In this regard, the evaluator's team would like to emphasise, that the validation as a process shall be completed during the time of funding from the ESF. The mainstreaming process, however, especially its vertical part, represents a long-term concept and it shall take place even in the period, when the DP's shall not be funded by CIP EQUAL.

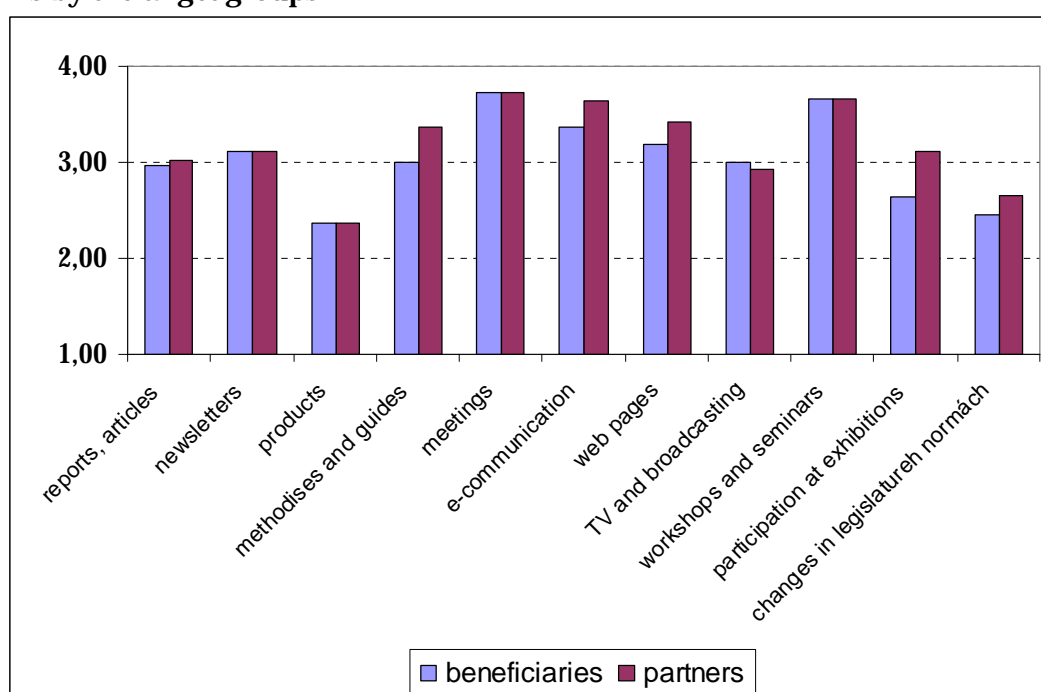
⁹⁸ See MoLSA (2007k)

The actual usability of such products in practice shall be verified only by the target groups and other entities working with such DP products. Validation should be primarily used for validation of the innovation and sustainability of the DP's results, so that the results which are not sustainable are not put into the process of mainstreaming.

Added value of the validation of good practice

Development partnerships get information about the usage of the outcomes of DP's in various manners. The most common include personal meetings, e-mail communication and seminars. Other manners are characterised by poorer information acquisition.

Chart 8: Value of information from the sources concerning the usage of the outcomes from the DP's by the target groups



Source: Questionnaire Surveys

Mechanisms established for assessments and good practice validation

Good practice validation takes place both within the self-assessment of the individual DP's and within the NTN. Meetings of the represented DP's with similar focus or outcomes with experts can be used as a suitable benchmarking of the project outcome standards.

When conceiving mechanisms, the comments included in the previous evaluation reports are used, as well as the experience gathered abroad.

In relation to the need to facilitate the DP's to clearly define and demonstrate the innovation of their products, to promote them and carry out vertical mainstreaming in an efficient manner, the methodology of product validation⁹⁹ has been developed, based on the

⁹⁹ Product validation methodology, version 1.1; March 2008

methodology of validation of products of EQUAL in Portugal, with some modifications in the CR in accordance with Czech conditions (i.e. the parallel Actions 2 and 3).

The document contains particularly the following:

- Definition of target and added value of the product validation;
- Procedure of validation (phases);
- Definition of the participants of the validation process – product authors, peers, prospective users, external experts, policy makers and target groups (persons disadvantaged on the labour market);
- Profile of external validation expert.

Moreover they contain:

- validation tables used for the product validation for assessing their quality based on pre-defined criteria – innovation, empowerment (involvement of target groups), suitability, usability, accessibility, equality, transferability and 2 optional areas;
- Detailed schedule of the validation – description of the steps of validation proceedings.

In relation to the validations, two seminars dealing with the good practice validation took place (29 May 2007 and 23 January 2008), where the validation methodology was introduced and in case of the latter one, first practical experience with the validated products were presented, together with recommendations concerning validations and validation proceedings.

The following mechanisms have been developed to support the implementation of validation within the mainstreaming principle:

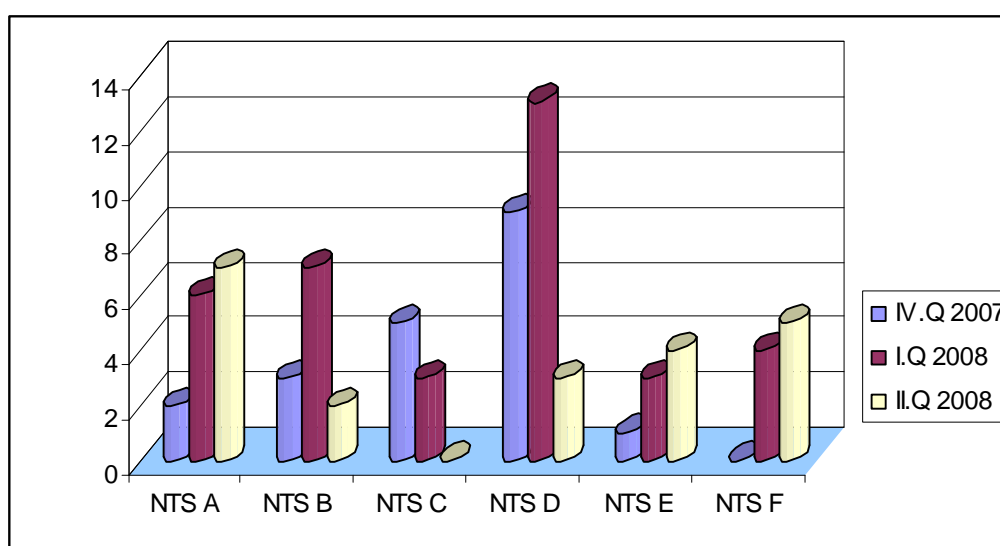
- Co-ordination group in the NTN – it should ensure a strategic approach to the support for the mainstreaming at the programme/national level (vertical mainstreaming) and its co-ordination at the moment of creation of validated products. Within such a co-ordination, the MA shall support vertical mainstreaming (contacting relevant representatives of the public administration, sponsoring meetings etc.), particularly in the case of validated products.
- Validation experts – carry out the expert support for validations. Each validation must take place under their presence. This function is remunerated. Note: in many cases, these validation experts have been long-term experts of the NTN.
- Organisation of a conference on vertical mainstreaming – the conference presents validated products, its objective is to increase the awareness on such activities (conference proceedings).
- Database of good and bad practice – examples of products and their characterisation in the form of proceedings (problems with high-quality documents).

The status of ongoing validations

From September 2007 to 30 June, validations on 77 products of CIP EQUAL were performed,¹⁰⁰ while the main wave of validations took place during the first quarter of 2008 (when 33 products were validated).

Reports from the validation meetings are sent to the recipients of the NSS, where they are checked and collected. Afterwards, the reports including the source documentation are sent to the MA for further utilisation. The results of validations are taken into account when selecting projects for the EU database, for various publications and presentations at conferences.

Chart 9: Number of validating DP's and validated products per NTN, June 2008



As regards the number of products validated up to June 2008, the NTN D is clearly dominating. On the contrary, the NTN C, E and F are running behind if measured by the number of validated products.

As regards the number of validations, the NTN (C, E, F), which have been most active in the mainstreaming phase are running behind, and vice versa (NTN D).

The reports on the implementation of the mainstreaming show that the main wave of validations appeared as late as in the 1st quarter of 2008. Moreover, the summaries mentioned above clearly show that some NTN's (particularly the NTN E and F with only an insignificant number of validated products as of March 2008) run behind in the area of validations. To eliminate prospective delays in the vertical mainstreaming, the MA adopted within a co-ordinated vertical mainstreaming certain measures fighting delays – all the addressees assessing the usability obtained both the products being validated and the product being prepared for validation – the addressee were also offered the possibility of direct participation on validation. Validated products include mainly some methodological tools and educational products – while the methodological tools include especially methodologies and handbooks. Educational products form another important group (courses and educational materials), focusing mostly on disadvantaged groups (particularly

¹⁰⁰ According to the validation documents delivered to the NSS.

deaf people), new communication tools (ICT and e-learning) and the development of personal and entrepreneurial skills.

All the validated products had to fulfil the criterion of innovation, it is however apparent in practice, that not all of the products are fully innovative, especially from the EU perspective.

Relevance for the national and regional policies

Based on experience with validation of innovations and good practice in other Member States and on stimuli coming from the NTN's, the MA and NSS created a system and unified methodology for the validation of good practice and innovative products, that could be used by all the NTN's – taking into account the broad specialisation of the NTN's, it is possible to assume that they will be usable for the national and regional policies in the area of human resource development throughout the CR.

Validation is going on in two manners – either within a NTN or outside a NTN – both manners using the same methodology. The validation itself takes the form of a validation proceedings, with the participation of external experts, prospective users of the products, product authors, peers and/or other stakeholders. Products are assessed from the point of view of 7 basic quality criteria: innovation, empowerment, reasonability/suitability, usability/benefits, equality, transferability – related closely to the basic principles of CIP EQUAL. The validation process is described in detail in the handbook for recipients concerning the CIP EQUAL product validation.

The validations performed so far are successful (i.e. the product has been validated without any significant problems). On the one hand, this may decrease the credibility of validations and their added value and to create an impression that the participants of the validation have not been sufficiently critical.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, it results from the settings of the validation system (where the DP's and NTNs are responsible for validation and the selection of “validators”) and from the fact, that only the products “having large probability concerning the success of their validation” are selected by DPs for validations (DP's themselves perform the primary selection of products and in general they validated only the “best” of them, eventually only that products, in which it is desirable an official support of MA by their mainstreaming, which is conditioned just by successful validation). Only the practice can at last confirm the suitability of products.

The practice has shown that not all products are completely innovative. Thus the NSS staff is also focusing on consultations of what to do with the product developed. A typical mainstreaming problem, for instance, represents the situation, when a certain product could be innovative e.g. a year ago, but due to the length of the complete process, the outside environment has changed and the product has lost its innovation. Therefore the DP's have specified the reasons, why a certain product is better and more innovative very carefully, and the main problems can be seen in the definition of innovation – i.e. what is / is not innovation.

The promotion of mainstreaming at the national level (vertical mainstreaming) from the NTN's position has proved to be rather inefficient. MA, being a public authority, has a better position to assume the main role within vertical mainstreaming.

¹⁰¹ Minutes from the second coordination meeting of the NTN

Conclusions and recommendations

Since the final quarter of 2007, products developed within CIP EQUAL have been validated and the main validation wave took place in the first quarter of 2008. Some NTN's, however, had (almost) no products validated by March 2008. The MA, however, adopted measures to limit the delay within the vertical mainstreaming.

Activity at the level of individual NTN's, the number of validated products measured (results) does not correspond to the "level of activity" within the frames of the mainstreaming, as measured by monitoring indicators for individual NTN's (see chapter 3.5; chart 6).

The validations performed so far are successful (i.e. the product has been validated without any significant problems). It is however apparent, that not all projects are completely innovative.

Validation should be primarily used for validation of the innovation and sustainability of the DP's results, so that the results which are not sustainable are not put into the process of mainstreaming. From the point of view of learning, it would be interesting to deal with the "bad practice" as well (e.g. in relation to projects that have not been validated). Only the practice can at last confirm the suitability of products.

The main difference in understanding of validation as a obligation, in comparison with a perception of validation contribution for DPs. If the validation is performed only formally, for programmes requirements, its contribution will be probably low. If DPs will understand the validation contribution as a possibility for communication with target groups and they will invite to validations delegates of target groups, than they can obtain invaluable information and stimulations.

We recommend, to realize these validations in such meaning (with an active participation of target groups) in the following programmes especially in multiannual projects, where is possible to expect dynamic changes in the whole project environment and by target groups. Validation in such case would be used as a verification of target groups needs and a link between product and these needs.

DPs can also obtain invaluable information about real needs of target groups, which are possible to use in another phase of sustainability of the project, eventually to use for "mapping" of target groups need for giving reasons for further projects.

Within CIP EQUAL, a system and unified methodology for the validation of good practice and innovative products has been created, so that such products can be used for national and regional politics in the area of human resources throughout the Czech territory.

4.11 Vertical Mainstreaming and Dissemination Mechanism

Conditions for Vertical Mainstreaming in the Czech Republic

In general, a number of DPs abroad confuse dissemination with mainstreaming (Dahan 2006, p. 164) and the effect thereof is also the fact that much greater attention is paid to dissemination, and vertical mainstreaming remains rather a marginal matter. In addition,

this study mentions¹⁰² that at the level of DPs in the EU, mainstreaming and in particular vertical mainstreaming is a task, which no one is really sure how to precisely realise. It comes to light that a similar situation occurred also in DPs in the CR. This is indicated by information both from NTN discussion and from the conference “Od teorie k praxi – úspěšné příběhy” (“From Theory to Practice – Success Stories” held on 19 November 2007) and also from the results of a questionnaire research. According to the above-mentioned study, one may say in general that DPs in the CR are in a similar situation as those in other EU countries.

NTN functioning for vertical mainstreaming and dissemination mechanisms

NTN seems to be a tool, which assists DPs with the issues of horizontal mainstreaming in particular. Information from NTN discussion provided to officials representing relevant institutions of state administration may be a suitable supporting tool for vertical mainstreaming, however, not an absolutely sufficient one.

Experiences with contacting politicians and influential officials differ between NTNs and DPs. NTN for example mentions in the minutes of its discussions dated 23 March 2007 that the NTN itself is aware of the fact that “... many DPs are not able to identify particular influential persons within individual ministries and authorities.” According to the information stated in minutes from all NTNs, it is obvious that certain individuals and individual DPs have this competence.¹⁰³

In order for vertical mainstreaming to be possible and successful at all, it is necessary to break new ground for it in terms of awareness of the public, interest groups and politicians. It is very probable that a systematic change that will have a very positive impact on target groups might not be enforced at all if the politicians are not aware of it and are not willing to discuss it. In their reports on mainstreaming, all NTNs mention newspaper and TV coverage, leaflets, seminars, conferences, training and discussions. All of these are activities that may prepare suitable foundations for vertical mainstreaming. Without such activities and without a certain awareness of the general public about certain proposals, politicians will not be willing to discuss any change in the system.

Experience of NTN B indicates that DPs and NTNs must demonstrate a lot of patience and must expect that vertical mainstreaming will be characterised by a number of short-term failures and refusals. Nevertheless, only a long-term pressure on the respective policy-makers may be successful in the long term.

Generally we may conclude that the NTNs have defined target groups for vertical mainstreaming in a rather intuitive manner, including the European Commissar Vladimír Špidla¹⁰⁴, ministers¹⁰⁵, deputy ministers, managers of important budgetary and allowance

¹⁰² P. 167

¹⁰³ Names or organizations and names for all NTNs that have taken specific steps in the vertical mainstreaming, are not specified.

¹⁰⁴ Commissar V. Špidla was required as an addressee only by one DP, nevertheless, MA did not find this justified and deleted him from the list.

organisations (e.g. CzechInvest), officials of the central administration (MoLSA, MI, MIT, MF, MoEYS), personnel of bureaus of labour, regional authorities, etc.¹⁰⁶ It is necessary to add that the above-mentioned “intuitive” definition of NTN or DPs respectively was subsequently analysed by long-term experts of NTNs and confirmed as a very good one. In particular addressing other ministries, especially MoEYS, was very important.

Assessing the suitability and efficiency of the NTN tool for vertical mainstreaming and dissemination mechanisms.

As concerns the very functioning and fulfilment of NTN, the assessment of suitability and efficiency by individual respondents varied to a great extent. Positive assessment applied in particular to steps taken for the sake of effective functioning, namely in particular in the form of minutes from meetings, a simplified manner of communication and distribution of information, which improved the functioning efficiency of this tool. Positive assessment also applied to the engagement of institutions, which by their activity support the efficiency of innovative tools. With some NTNs, the fact that engaged experts were not active to the same extent and that they had various levels of qualification and experiences in wider enforcement of similar products in practice or in the legislative environment came to light as a negative aspect.

Within vertical mainstreaming, MA assessment of feedback – product usability by prospective users – was performed. For the evaluation, “assessment of presented projects of individual NTNs (except for labour offices)” was selected, which was presented at the ESF forum in June 2008. The projects were presented to various assessors by their focus. The following table states the number of presented projects and the total number of addressed assessors. The table further states the number of opinions found relevant in relation to the issues being solved by the assessor as well as the number of opinions that will be used.

¹⁰⁵ In particular the minister for the area of human rights and national minorities, Džamila Stehliková, was mentioned in several cases and she even accepted sponsorship over certain events.

¹⁰⁶ The professional umbrella institutions are not mentioned there as they are rather a target of horizontal mainstreaming and only as a secondary effect they may become participants of the vertical mainstreaming and help enforce the system changes.

The following table resulted from the selected sample of assessments (except for projects intended for labour offices):

Table 39: Vertical mainstreaming – feedback: assessment of CIP EQUAL product usability by prospective users (except for labour offices) of individual NTN in the CR

NTN	Number of projects	Number of opinions	Positive opinions	Conformity with policy	Full use	Premise of legislative change*
A	2	12	11	11	6	3
B	7	11	5	5	2	0
C	6	17	11	8	8	0
D	16	21	19	17	15	2
E	7	22	20	18	13	3
F	3	27	15	15	13	1
Total	41	110	81	74	57	9

Source: ESF forum; feedback of vertical mainstreaming addressees to those products, in relation to which MA support was required, published on 2 June 2008.

** Precise wording of the question for assessors: Is it possible to expect changes in legislation on the basis of the concerned product and what kind of changes?*

Most projects were presented within NTN D. In order to assess the quality of presented projects, 110 opinions were prepared from departments of addressed institutions of subject-matter venue. Some opinions were assessed by one assessor, others were assessed by several of them. It came to light, however, that certain projects were not relevant for assessment on the concerned theme that falls under the competence of the respective assessor. These projects were not assessed, which was manifested in the lower number of positive opinions. The usability of created products in the future was claimed approximately by half of the prepared opinions. Only nine opinions expected a change of legislation in connection of project realisation.

This comparison points out the functioning differences of individual NTNs, which is caused inter alia by their focus. In order to support functioning, it would be suitable to establish more extensive cooperation and exchange of experiences between individual NTNs.

Other forms of mechanisms for dissemination of good practice at the programme level

NTNs are not the sole form of mainstreaming mechanism. The other forms include targeted dissemination of news, personal contacts and membership in committees and workgroups, organising workshops and seminars, participation at trade fairs and exhibitions, electronic communication, audio-visual materials and likewise. In this section, it is suitable to briefly state a basic summary of currently realised activities supporting the conditions and environment of vertical mainstreaming of a long-term nature and therefore the targeted and effective influence on policy-makers and other representatives from the practice can not do without similar activities (see also MoLSA (2008*l*), p. 1 and 7):

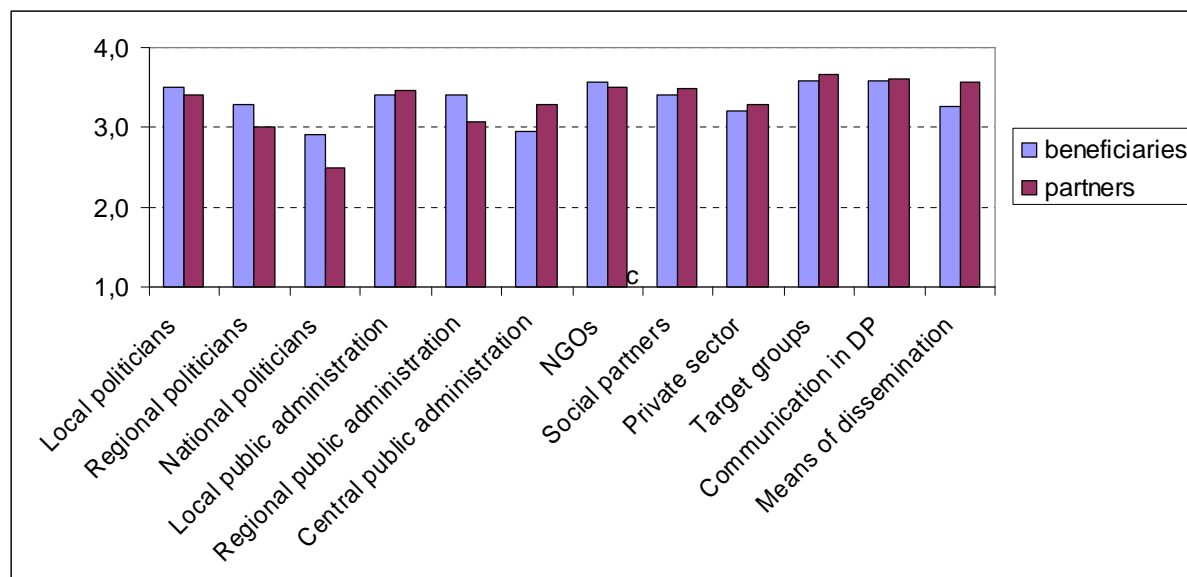
- Final conference of the programme CIP EQUAL – “*Veletrh inovací pro otevřený trh práce*” (“*Trade Fair of Innovations for an Open Labour Market*”) – realisation of various workshops, exhibitions presenting current developed products (22–23 April 2008);
- Coordination of activities of vertical mainstreaming by MA – organising a number of discussions with relevant departments of the MoLSA of the CR, key ones for the labour market policy; addressing other national departments, institutions and regional autonomous administrations under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; handover of EQUAL outcomes intended for labour offices through Employment Services Administration of the MoLSA of the CR;
- A workshop on vertical mainstreaming held in March 2008 where the participants had an opportunity to practise preparation of strategy and syllabus for discussions with policy-makers in practice;
- Long-term engagement of experts in NTN activities – in this respect, this means fulfilment of recommendations from previous evaluations concerning the issue of experts and their role in CIP EQUAL implementation;
- Third annual conference of CIP EQUAL in November 2007 focused on support of developed product transfer to their prospective users, policy-makers, politicians and executive representatives of the MoLSA of the CR;
- Commenting preparation of the new generation of programmes financed from ESF in the period 2007-2013 by the managing authority of CIP EQUAL (in particular HRE OP) with focus on enforcement of the main principles of CIP EQUAL.

Supporting factors and obstacles inhibiting vertical mainstreaming

Vertical mainstreaming at the level influencing legislation (laws, etc.) represents a really long-term process. This fact is caused by legislation procedures and formal processes. From this point of view it is clear that a number of DPs in the CR cannot influence the legislation within the timeframe of Action 3. It is therefore important to be prepared for this process also in the period when they are no longer directly supported by CIP EQUAL.

As Dahan (2006, p. 165) states, a specific case of mainstreaming is in Great Britain where Action 3 has been passed to DPs, which has had a positive effect on the possibility of common decision-making of DPs; however, the position of NTN remains rather unclear. In addition, the smaller possibility of other DPs sharing experiences in mainstreaming and in particular limited sharing of DP outputs in relation to other DPs (horizontal mainstreaming) seems to be a negative aspect. From this point of view, the role of NTN is considered desirable.

Chart 10: Effect of factors on mainstreaming success

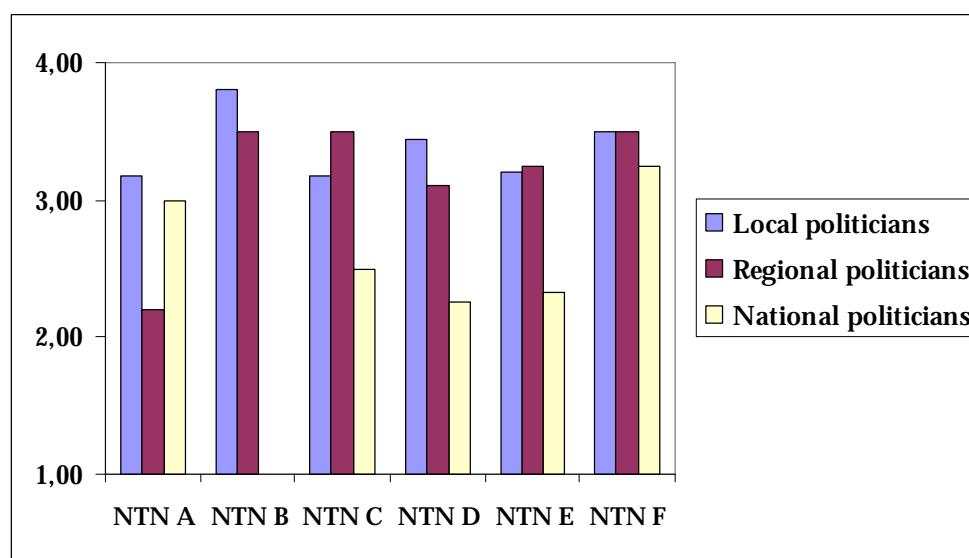


Source: Questionnaire research

The above-mentioned chart clearly shows that working with political representation declines with the distance from politicians. It is a paradox that working with national politicians is necessary for successful systematic changes. This factor is even more obvious when we compare how many DPs cooperated with politicians by respective levels. Only half of the respondents worked with national politicians (or attempted to work with them). The charts show also the more important role of the recipient compared to partners in DP).

The following chart confirms similar conclusions also at the level of individual NTN.

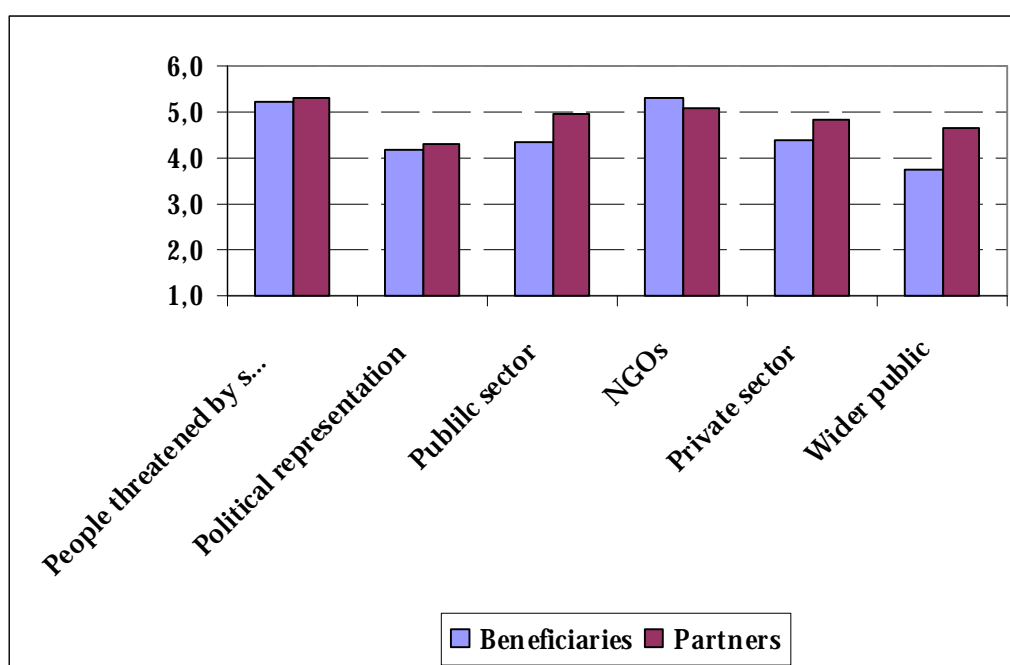
Chart 11: Perception of political representation influence on successful mainstreaming



Source: Questionnaire research

It is clear from the target groups included into DP activities that DPs are primarily focused on target groups imminently threatened by social exclusion and unemployment and on organisations cooperating with them (in this case primarily NGO). A much lower focus is apparent in the area of systematic solution of the situation of persons imminently threatened by social exclusion. From the long-term point of view, one may say that for the very target group (i.e. persons socially excluded and unemployed), it would have been more suitable to work with a change of systematic framework and thereby solve the reason of their exclusion rather than to solve their difficult situation (without removal of long-term causes).

Chart 12: Assessment of target groups inclusion into dissemination of DP results



Source: Questionnaire research

Summary and recommendations

DPs should be prepared for the fact that vertical mainstreaming is rather a long-term matter. It will have to be continued also after termination of support from the means of CIP EQUAL.

It is necessary to apply mainstreaming both in its horizontal and vertical meaning, using both formalised procedures and informal contacts with politicians and officials. MA of CIP EQUAL should play an active role when assisting DPs with vertical mainstreaming in the form of a reference point not only in the current year 2008 but also in the period following the completion of DP activities, i.e. in the period when the very CIP EQUAL will terminate. MA has experiences in particular with vertical mainstreaming at a national level, it has consecutive contacts not just with politicians and policy-makers but also with similar MAs in certain member states of the EU.

When fulfilling its task, MA should focus in particular on its “umbrella” role in vertical management coordination even though responsibility for activities concerning vertical

management still remains with individual DPs. The above-mentioned “umbrella” role should rest in two main areas of activity:

- Current contacts with policy-makers and experts, keep using experts in individual areas when executing other operational programmes financed from RSF, i.e. via narrow cooperation with other MA of the new generation of ESF operational programmes (e.g. execution of general agreements with other MAs on possibilities of further publicity and practical application of validated innovative products).
- Using workshops and seminars, engaging other departments (in particular MIT, MoEYS and MRD but also others), representatives of local government (regional as well as municipal ones) and the wider public into the process via the current network of non-profit organisations (in sequence of NTN).

In their mainstreaming activities, DPs should suitably apply all its parts (horizontal as well as vertical ones) in mutual combination in order to generate a concentrated pressure on policy-makers both by DPs and by public opinion and other interest groups.

4.11.1 Relevance of disseminating mechanisms for generating influence on policy-makers

Dissemination mechanisms represent a significant factor of possible influence on policy-makers or other entities, which operate in everyday practice. Therefore the principle of mainstreaming has to be assessed also in terms of disclosed information, efficiency and the systematic nature of the steps taken.

Dissemination is an expression for planned manners of increasing the awareness and knowledge of the other concerned persons/entities involved using dissemination of outputs and gained experiences when solving the projects.

Development Partnerships have to very clearly distinguish between the very dissemination of project results and their approximation and provision to target groups, which is a routine activity in a certain respect, and the mainstreaming, which has a very creative, selective and purposeful character, focusing on important functionaries and officials with decision-making competencies, who are capable of influencing important decisions and policies at all levels of the decision-making domain. The dissemination itself, using the form of press, publications, Internet, conferences, seminars, etc. does not have to represent a sufficiently strong and convincing tool for the transfer of the results of our projects to the target groups.

For effective application of the achieved results, the DP s– particularly in the final and most important phase – have to use mainstreaming and exert systematic and direct pressure on the key stakeholders with decision-making competencies of the respective level, so that their innovative products can be included in the relevant policies and practice. One of the most effective procedures is their active engagement in this process so that they are able to raise their requirements and priorities in the course of solving and forming innovative procedures. The possible prerequisite of their active engagement seems to be the preparation of a motivating system for engagement of these experts. These motivations shall have both a financial character (for experts from the private sphere) and a non-financial one (e.g. for

experts from the public sector, for whom a special financial reward would be problematic). Analysis of common practice has identified a whole range of obstacles with weakening effects of the published information, thus decreasing the efficiency with regard to the target groups; on the other hand, there are also practices in making information accessible that have significantly enhancing effects on innovative products (personal contacts, lobbying, engagement of important representatives of target groups in the work of DP s, etc.). Within these activities, dissemination is only one of many in the logical row of mainstreaming, and definitely not the most important one.

The following text summarises in four sections (A-D) the key aspects of disseminating mechanisms for generating influence on policy-makers (i.e. making information accessible, frequency and possibility, information timing and focus, dissemination efficiency):

A) Procedures of disseminating (spreading) results generated in the project

Procedure	Description
Personal contacts	Personal contacts with politicians and crucial officials, members and representatives of target groups, lobbying in Parliament and other organisations and institutions, membership in committees, workgroups
Targeted dissemination – printed media	Reports and articles in newspapers, press conferences/press releases, own “Bulletin”
Informal as well as official events	Workshops and seminars, conferences, congresses, symposia
Organised presentations	Products, methodologies, instructions
Electronic communication	Own web site, e-mail, internet conferences, blogs
Audio-visual communication	TV shots and broadcasts, radio shots and broadcasts, own audio-visual media (CD, DVD)
Participation at exhibitions, trade fairs	Active participation, display stand, presentation, passive participation (dissemination of information and awareness of work of DPs, establishing contacts)
Purpose-focused educational activities for target groups	
Building broader communication networks	

B) Systematic arrangement of enabling access to information, frequency and possibility

DPs should ensure the spreading of project results systematically both in terms of time and matter of fact. Basic types of information made accessible via one of the above-mentioned dissemination procedures (preferentially their suitable combinations):

- Interim results in the form of up-to-date information;
- Strategic and final reports;
- Synthesised outputs, recommendations, instructions, methodologies;
- Complex-prepared examples of good practice.

Systematic enabling of access to information should be provided by the following tools and procedures:

- Mainstreaming and disseminating strategy (plan);
- Communication plan;
- Creating a lobbying strategy;
- Publishing own “Bulletin” (in printed or electronic form);
- Preparation and use of the mailing list including the whole target group;
- Provision of targeted preparation of a message (“made-to-measure”) for respective target groups;
- Timing and precise distribution of information so that it gets to the correct place, at the correct time.

C) Taking into account needs at the local, regional or national level

Based on the focus of a project and its geographical importance, a DP shall define target groups for the project results within its mainstreaming and dissemination strategies. In the majority of cases, the political needs at the respective level (local, regional, national) are taken into account already when building the DPs. In this respect, the respective authorities and institutions should be involved in active participation in the operation of the DP. This is applicable for the following partner groups/target groups:

- Local authorities and their officials;
- Regional authorities and their officials;
- State authorities and their officials;
- Non-government non-profit organisations;
- Social partners;
- Business sector.

D) Efficiency of dissemination measures

The main purpose of dissemination is to make some innovative elements accessible with a view to their inclusion in policies and management processes. The efficiency of dissemination can be objectively evaluated by the efficiency of the disseminated innovative elements and their subsequent specific utilisation. As it is often very difficult to objectively measure innovations using measurable quantitative indicators, some of the following methods must be applied:

- Research of the available resources relevant for the type of activities of the concerned DP or for the nature of the validated product respectively, for the purpose of setting a reference level;
- Ongoing research during the project, regular comparison with the selected reference level;
- Comparison with previous rounds of CIP EQUAL;

- Ongoing qualitative research based on the testimonies of partners, target groups, experts and all other project participants.

Assessment of current development on the basis of performed researches

It follows from structured interviews with DP representatives that the criterion $\frac{\text{price}}{\text{effect}}$ is important for decision-making concerning application of a certain manner of information dissemination. Hence in most cases, maximum use of the web site and e-mail correspondence are concerned. In general we may conclude that DP representatives consider the following options to be the best methods of disseminating information: own web site, communication via e-mail, reports and articles in newspapers, workshops and seminars, conferences and congresses, methodologies and instructions, organised presentations, informal meetings of concerned participants, press conferences/press releases, publishing own bulletin.

In terms of enabling access to information and interim results, the following forms are the most frequently applied: up-to-date information, strategic and final reports, synthesised outputs, recommendations, instructions and methodologies and complex-prepared examples of good practice. Of the addressed partnerships that filled in the questionnaire, a small portion apply these forms only sometimes and just an insignificant portion of respondents do not apply them at all.

Systematic dissemination of results of their projects is provided by 87 % of the respondents stating it is a part of their mainstreaming strategy. They are not published systematically by 13 % of the respondents, who publish them ad hoc as required. Only 4 % of the Developing Partnerships, which joined the research, do not publish information and results in the course of the project solution and they publish only the final report.

We devoted the next research to the strategic and long-term approach of individual Development Partnerships to the application of the mainstreaming principle. A vast majority of the respondents are particular about the communication and recommendations being direct and formulated in relation to the target groups and about the information getting to these groups in the correct time. More than half of the DPs that completed the questionnaire use their own Bulletin to influence target groups. Half of the respondents had a prepared communication plan and a list of addressees, for whom the communication, information and recommendations are intended. Only 16 % of DPs have generated a lobbying strategy, which might however form a significant basis for DPs generating influence on policy-makers.

The next question was aimed at the role of individual factors in the success of dissemination and mainstreaming of DP outputs. The research included a whole range of factors and the respondents expressed their opinions on the extent of their influence on the overall effects of project result dissemination and mainstreaming. As a highly supportive factor, most respondents identified the assessment of the nature and needs of target groups, definition of the project purpose, costs of realisation and trust in the initiated change. Most of the other factors were only classified as supportive ones by them (for example focus and formulation of mainstreaming strategy, timing of disseminating activities, ongoing implementation of results – use of mainstreaming opportunities as soon as they occur; definition of milestones/opportunities when it is suitable to publish selected information; enabling access

to results before the project termination/handover of strategic and final reports and opening of an official discussion concerning them; communication plan, engagement of individual partners of DPs during planning).

Answers to the question focused on individual manners of dissemination and enforcement of results achieved by DPs when solving projects and their actual effects on the labour market proved that the respondents attribute a very significant influence to the ongoing maintenance of the list of contacts of target groups and records of their needs, ongoing monitoring of policy/legislation in the area of interest and monitoring development/changes and formulation of conclusions and specific recommendations in a clear, simple and unambiguous manner and addressing politicians, important officials and other officials with decision-making competencies. Most respondents evaluated as significant the effect of other methods of dissemination and enforcement of project results on the labour market (regular analyses of changes in legislation and possible adjustments of the mainstreaming strategy, regular monitoring and analysis of information on activities and results of other projects focused on similar issues, communication with other DPs – solvers of similarly focused issues, application of the method of successive steps upon handover and enforcement of results. It is an interesting finding that 15 % of the respondents identified the effect of addressing politicians, important officials and other officials with decision-making competencies on the labour market as insignificant. A further 10 % of the respondents identified the effect of a regular analysis of changes in legislation, possible adjustments of the mainstreaming strategy and the application of the method of successive steps upon handover and enforcement of results, as insignificant too.

The dissemination measures were most efficient at the local and regional level where in a vast majority of cases, thanks to greater sensibility and a willingness to solve problems as well as personal contacts with local and regional politicians, the launching of innovative products has been successful. A significantly lower efficiency is reached with the enforcement of innovative products at the national level as discussions with politicians on the top level is markedly more complicated and often useless due to the busyness and frequent lack of interests of the politicians.

Main results and conclusions

- DP representatives should apply proven dissemination procedures (press, publications, leaflets, conferences, seminars, web sites and likewise) and by their suitable combination making use of the synergic effect in particular, they should systematically arrange the enforcement of innovative products in relevant policies and practice by influencing the key stakeholders (personal discussions, lobbying etc.) and their active engagement in the concerned area.
- According to the results of desk-research, questionnaire research as well as direct interviews, the most efficient methods of dissemination prove to be methods based on direct, personal contact between project solvers and the target groups including policy-makers at all levels.
- Other important forms of dissemination of the project solution results are workshops, seminars and conferences, which are an opportunity to meet and debate for the

project solvers on one side and representatives of target groups on the other side and ideally also the policy-makers.

- Other forms of personal contacts include organised presentations and informal meeting of concerned participants.
- The important transmitted methods of the project result dissemination are own web sites, communication via e-mail, reports and articles in newspapers or other media (TV, radio). In this case it is very important for these published results to be provided by a qualified PR employee with experience in this area. This employee provides communication with the media and is necessary for event presentation of some key product or project stage, organising and managing press conferences, and forming an important bridge for the speedy handover of information into media.
- Most DPs arrange systematic dissemination of their project results as it forms a part of their mainstreaming strategy. A smaller proportion of DPs do not publish the results systematically and rather react according to the current needs. Only an insignificant portion of DPs do not publish their results in the course of solving the project and only publish the final report.

Recommendations

Research performed via desk-research, web questionnaire and structured interviews proved that the main operational problem of DPs in the area of dissemination is to provide systems enabling access of the developed innovative procedures to the precisely defined target groups, and the fact that dissemination efficiency is the highest upon personal contact at the decision-making level. The following recommendation follows from the above-mentioned analysis:

- The basic prerequisite of an efficient dissemination of solution results is a well prepared mainstreaming strategy and regular updates reflecting the current developments, the DP strategy has to start from the strategy of the relevant NTN, which is consistent with the National Mainstreaming Strategy. In DPs as well as NTNs, at least one expert should be earmarked who will be responsible for their performance and regular updating.
- If a DP uses a new innovative dissemination method, which fails to prove successful, then we recommend using the standard, currently proven methods, which include in particular personal contacts, bilateral and multilateral discussions, workshops, seminars, conferences, own web sites and modern information technologies. It is necessary to suitably supplement them with well-timed articles in the press or TV and radio broadcasts. For these activities, it is necessary to arrange cooperation of a PR expert who will guarantee the professional standard of the discussion preparation, organising workshops and conferences, web sites and papers published in media.

Factors affecting the standard of dissemination mechanisms

There are many barriers in common practice inhibiting the common methods of dissemination mechanisms. During the evaluation, it is therefore important to focus on the factors limiting the operation of these processes too.

The practice proves that dissemination is only a tool that can either fulfil its purpose or fail. As mentioned above, dissemination realised only via publications, web sites, conferences and seminars is usually not enough. When enforcing innovative products into relevant policies and practice, it is necessary to fully apply the principle of mainstreaming and to systematically, at the correct time and place (e.g. with regard to political situation on the national or regional level) by all possible means, influence the key stakeholders in the concerned area, namely by their direct engagement into the operation of DPs, so that they have a permanent opportunity to raise their requirements and thereby modify the progress of the solution in order to achieve usable innovative products. There are many barriers in common practice, which weaken the effects of published information and weaken their efficiency on the target groups. On the other hand, there are such procedures that enable access to information, which might substantially enhance the effects of innovative products (personal contacts, lobbying, engagement of significant representatives of the target groups into operation of DPs and likewise).

On the basis of CIP EQUAL principles, available sources as well as assessment of experiences from current projects and performed research, one can identify the following main effects that may weaken/enhance efficiency of dissemination.

Effects weakening dissemination efficiency	Effects enhancing dissemination efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• vaguely defined purpose of the project;• absence of a mainstreaming strategy;• absence of a communication plan;• inefficient form of information dissemination;• unconvincing and unverified results;• insufficient engagement of individual members of the solving team during planning;• insufficient assessment of the nature and needs of the target groups;• incorrectly set structure of target groups/target group;• solvers fearing not being successful;• high costs of realisation;• insufficient trust in the initiated change;• insufficient interest of target groups, in particular politicians and officials with decision-making competencies;• insufficient communication between individual projects, fragmentation and overlapping of information, congestion of recipients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• correctly focused and formulated communication and mainstreaming strategy;• correct timing of dissemination activities;• ongoing implementation of results – using mainstreaming opportunities as soon as they occur;• defining milestones/opportunities when it is suitable to publish selected information;• making available the results even before the project completion/handover of strategic final reports and opening an official discussion in relation to them.

A summary of measures, the consistent application of which within dissemination or mainstreaming strategy respectively, as well as in the everyday operative work of DPs, it is possible to limit the effects of weakening factors and enhance efficiency of dissemination and mainstreaming:

- permanently maintained and updated list of contacts of all target groups and records of their needs;
- permanent monitoring of the state of policy/legislation in the area of interest and monitoring its development/changes;
- performing regular analysis in the course of solving the project of the manner, in which the possible changes in legislation (current as well as future one) affect the project, and possible adjustments of the mainstreaming strategy;
- regular monitoring and analysing information on activities and results of other projects focused on similar issues;
- communication with other DPs – solvers of similarly focused issues with the objective of reaching common solutions and development of common activities;
- when addressing politicians, important officials and other officials with decision-making competencies, coordinate one's activity and work together with other projects in order to enhance the requested effect;
- formulation of conclusions and specific recommendations in clear, simple and unambiguous manner;
- applying the method of successive steps when handing over and enforcing the results.

Main results and conclusions

The performed research proved a whole range of factors that significantly affect the efficiency of dissemination organisms. The most important factors weakening required effects and aspects of dissemination include: vaguely defined purpose of the project, insufficient communication and mainstreaming strategy, poor engagement of DP members, insufficient assessment of the nature and needs of the target groups and their structure. On the other hand, the analysis identified a whole range of significant enhancing factors, the application of which can substantially increase efficiency of the whole dissemination and also mainstreaming process: a correctly focused and formulated communication and marketing strategy that is regularly updated, reflecting new experiences, targeted timing of suitable dissemination activities in particular in terms of providing suitable occasions for publication of the results as soon as they are available, which in reality represents systematic enabling of access to the results even before the project completion with the objective of a timely (advance) launch of discussions concerning them. Other suitable forms are conferences on the issues of project results and in particular presentation of the developed and validated innovative products. Provided that the conference is well prepared and presented to the public, policy-makers and important officials attend its discussion. Efficiency of conferences is even increased in the event the conference is organised with international participation. Dissemination of results in the form of media publication has

proven less efficient. Web sites are more important for internal communication of DP partners rather than as an information channel for the wider public and in particular subjects of mainstreaming.

In connection therewith, it is necessary to underline mutual cohesion and permeation of dissemination and mainstreaming. It clearly follows from the basic premise that mainstreaming has to be closely linked with the topic of product innovativeness and validation that successful mainstreaming crowned by acceptance and application of innovative products is in all cases subject to the efficiency of the project results dissemination. This fact confirms also the above-mentioned conclusions identifying personal discussions with policy-makers and conferences (seminars) with their attending and in particular active engagement of these persons into the whole solution as the most efficient form of dissemination. As the weakest point of innovative product enforcement, the performed analysis identified the national level. Experiences show that all arguments and background papers provided to policy-makers and officials of ministries have to be sufficiently convincing and attractive and they have to provide them with starting points for the solution of specific problems of society and, in particular, the respective group of his/her voters.

Recommendations

The following recommendations aimed at enhancing the efficiency of dissemination and subsequently also mainstreaming can be derived from the performed research and structured interviews in particular on the basis of assessment of experiences of successful DPs:

- When applying the dissemination methods and subsequently the key principle of mainstreaming, apply all their aspects in a combination that will generate a concentrated pressure on policy-makers both by DPs and by public opinion and other interest groups;
- Suitably combine activities within dissemination and mainstreaming and thereby proceed according to the prepared and regularly updated communication plans and mainstreaming strategies;
- To develop and mutually support active cooperation in the field of methodological assistance of NTN for DPs with preparation of communication plans and mainstreaming strategies, in particular when selecting the most suitable methods of information transmission and communication with the target groups;
- Within DPs, to perceive communication and dissemination plans as an integral flexible attachment to the mainstreaming strategy and to regularly update it on the basis of assessing the efficiency and effects of individual dissemination procedures;
- To create conditions in the organisation structure of NTN as well as DPs for provision of efficient dissemination of the results as well as procedures for influencing the policy-makers having reflected their own results in them (set responsibilities, engage a qualified PR employee);
- To make the results of projects accessible as early as during the course of solving, and not to wait for the project completion and prepared final documents, and start

discussion over the running as well as partial results in the course of solving with an objective to maximally reflect the requirements of the target groups;

- To engage important policy-makers at the adequate level into the project realisation (regular running information, invitations to important events of the project – fundamental conferences and seminars, personal discussions and interventions). At the national level, make use of MPs and senators and establish active cooperation with them;
- Process all pieces of information for political as well as decision-making spheres absolutely, and specifically with a description of importance and the effects of innovative products on the respective groups of citizens, and clear suggestions for their use with specification of what we require from the politician, ministerial official or member of the executive.

4.11.2 Interim Mainstreaming Results

Interim results of the mainstreaming process start from the already defined basic mechanisms:

National mainstreaming strategy and its ongoing updating

This basic methodical document at the programme level for realisation of the mainstreaming principle in the CR is – with regard to the development within this programme – assessed on an ongoing basis (once every quarter) and on the basis of this assessment, it is also updated. In this sense, it is a lively document reflecting the current situation in partial areas included in the strategy.

National Thematic Networks

All DPs in Action 3 must be members of NTN as it is difficult to imagine mainstreaming of innovation activities without this supporting structure. NTN hence serve as a platform for meetings between DPs and policy-makers including meetings of DPs with each other, the target groups and likewise where they can actively carry out ongoing discussions over the results of their projects.

NTN A	Improvement of the approach and return to the labour market for persons who are difficult to integrate
NTN B	Process of establishing enterprises and development of individual business
NTN C	Strengthening social economy in particular community services
NTN D	Support for adaptability and life-long education
NTN E	Equal opportunities of men and women
NTN F	Integration on the labour market for foreigners and persons threatened by race intolerance

Representation of members in individual NTN originally seemed to be an area of problem as representatives of academic research spheres were completely absent as well as social partners, who are however not directly engaged in activities of CIP EQUAL but nevertheless have great experience in the field of labour market functioning, and can significantly

contribute both to vertical and horizontal mainstreaming. This situation started being solved by engaging the CMZR Bank (NTN – B), Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem (NTN – C), SKOK – The Association of Non-Governmental, Non-Profit Organisations Active in the Areas of Social Assistance and Social Health Care (NTN – C), Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences (NTN – E) and Masaryk University (NTN – E). Other NTNs (A, D, F) do not have direct representation of external entities from the research sphere or other social partners, which might have significantly supported the mainstreaming process. On the other hand, it is obvious that a number of experts from the mentioned range of institutions formed a part of individual DP projects, however, they did not directly attend discussions of individual NTNs. There was only indirect attendance via the delegates of the concerned DPs.

Mainstreaming at the level of DPs

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, DPs play a key role in the mainstreaming process basically in all stages of Action 3 while implementation of all activities connected with the respective dissemination and mainstreaming strategy falls within their responsibility. In 2007, methodical support of DPs was supported in drawing and preparation of mainstreaming activities via publishing or translating certain methodical handbooks¹⁰⁷ and organising various seminars.¹⁰⁸

Results of current research

The questionnaire research included the question “What mechanisms did your DP create or apply to mainstreaming” (2.05A01), which was answered in total by 83 members of DPs. These members assessed as very efficient/efficient the following mechanisms of applying the mainstreaming principle: engagement of executives and prospective users of innovations as of the beginning of solving the project, organising mainstreaming events (conferences, workshops, seminars), consultations with experts, ongoing engagement of and provision of information to the project target groups, engagement of representatives of the research sphere, social partners, in particular representatives of employers and trade unions into DP activities, organising exchanges between individual DPs, social partners.

The question concerning the manner of acquiring information on how the DP activities and outputs are used by the target groups – the feedback (2.07A01), was answered by 82 members from selected DPs. Most of those engaged consider personal meetings, workshops and seminars (excellent methods) to be the most important manner of acquiring information concerning application of activities/outcomes in their projects, in particular due to the option of direct discussions and contact with relevant representatives of the target groups. As good methods, they identified e.g. electronic communication, reports, articles, press releases, methodologies and instructions, newsletters, web sites of other organisations, TV and radio broadcasting. The identification “good” was used in particular due to the fact that with these

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Jak prosadit změnu – praktický průvodce mainstreamingem (How to promote a change – practical guide to mainstreaming), translation of a document from the European Commission.

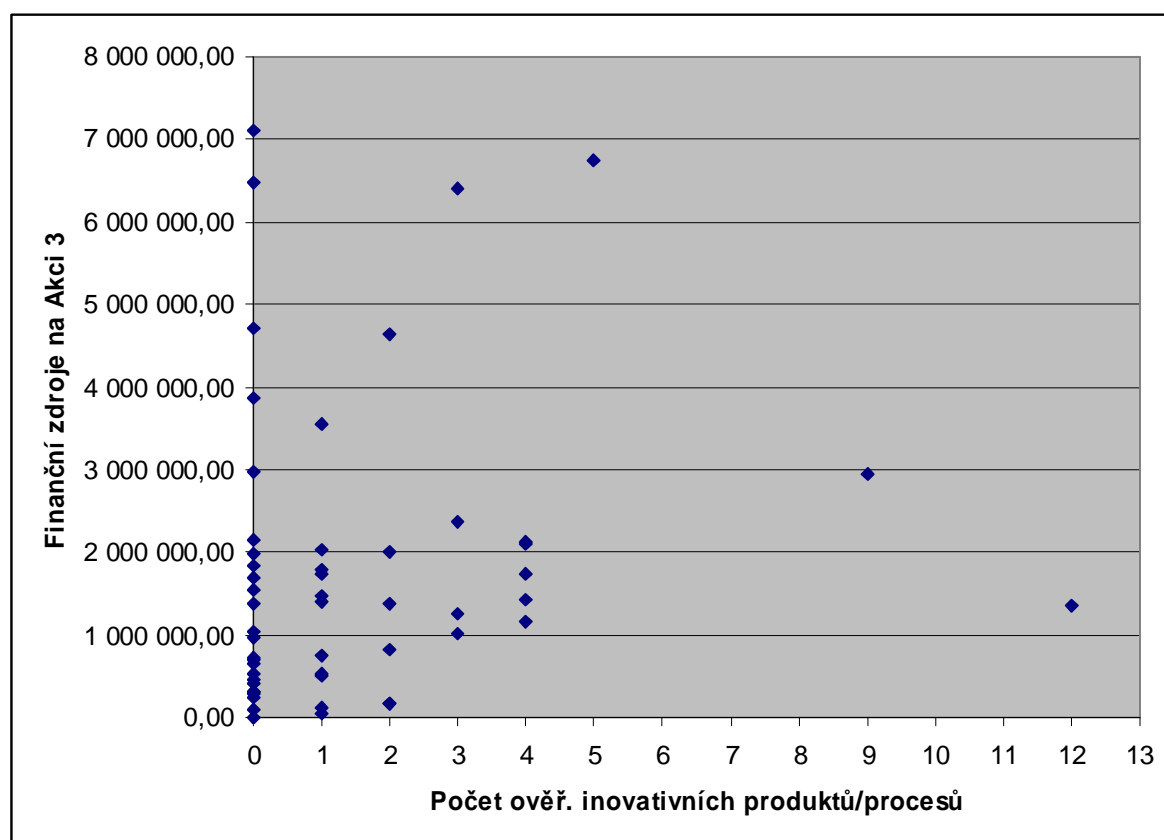
¹⁰⁸ E.g. a seminar that took place in March 2007 – “*Sebehodnocení projektů v rámci CIP EQUAL*” (Self-Assessment of Projects within CIP EQUAL) , 2 seminars took place in May 2007 – “*Představení Systému validace dobré praxe a metodologie validace inovativních produktů*” (Introduction to the System of Validation of Good Practice and Methodology of Validation of Innovative Products) and “*Gender Mainstreaming*”

forms of acquiring information concerning application of project outputs, there is no direct personal contact.

The question of support to mainstreaming activities of the Development Partnerships provided by NTN, NSS, MA (2.09A01) was answered by 53 members of DPs and other addressed participants. Most of them appreciate (as very efficient or efficient) the methodical support provided to DPs by MA and NSS. On the basis of results of evaluating the answers to this question, one may state that most engaged persons appreciate the methodical assistance provided by MA and NSS. The evaluation of their role within procurement of contacts with policy-makers (which is the main task of mainstreaming) is a bit more constrained.

The problems of the relationship between the mainstreaming strategy and the tools defined (planned) within this strategy for the sake of its application were addressed by the next question (2.10A02) answered by 77 participants of DPs. It follows from the answers that most planned tools (education modules, education materials, methodologies and instructions, publications and brochures, consultations, workshops and seminars) were actually used. They are common methods of mainstreaming, which are in general considered suitable. The success of mainstreaming naturally depends on quality and validated (or otherwise verified) products. It follows from the data of MSSF Monit (see the chart below) that most DPs in their projects in Action 3 planned budgets up to CZK 2 million and as of June 2008, they validated approximately 1-4 products. Quite a significant portion of DPs had not validated their product yet. In this sense, the above-mentioned applied tools are suitable to provide information on the issues solved by the respective DP and to increase awareness of the target group of the solved topic.

Chart 13: Validated products and their financial coverage within Action 3



answered by 73 DP participants. They clearly consider personal contact and regular meetings or live electronic communication and workshops and seminars and further web sites, questionnaire researches as well as regular monitoring of newspapers and expert press or information from other media (TV, radio) respectively to be the most successful method of acquiring information from the target groups.

An important precondition of the project results/outputs application in practice and hence of an efficient mainstreaming is a direct participation of target group representatives in operation of DPs or the respectively NTN. A total of 77 participants provided their opinion on this question (2.12A08). They identified mutual consulting and ongoing cooperation, participation of target group representatives in DPs and regular exchange of information to be the most successful and efficient method of the target group engagement.

The assessment of effects and practical use of the DP results is a very important method of consistent improvement of DP operation and in particular, it allows operative reacting to the changing political, economic as well as social situation in the state and thereby also to the changes in requirements of the respective target groups (2.12A09). The research included 58 respondents. They identified self-assessment within individual DPs the most useful method, they also consider as useful assessment on the basis of the MA methodology (e.g. also the methodology for validations) and the assessment of mainstreaming potential of the project by an independent expert.

What politicians, officials, social partners and procedures had the greatest impact on the success of mainstreaming of selected DPs was subject to examination in the next questionnaire question (2.12A10). The research included 70 DP participants. According to their opinion, the success of mainstreaming was attributable to the greatest extent to the target groups and communication within DPs, non-governmental non-profit organisations and social partners were useful too. An important role was also played by the applied methods of disseminating information about DPs. The contribution of politicians and officials was assessed by the questionnaire respondents in the descending order by the levels: local, regional and national.

The opinions of DP participants concerning the structure of the target groups included into mechanisms related to dissemination and mainstreaming of good practice in the area of employment policy and social inclusion were inquired in the next questionnaire questions (2.13B01). It follows from answers of 71 participants that the most important target group is clearly the group of people threatened by unemployment and social exclusion and further the public sector, non-state non-profit organisations and also business entities.

Current results of mainstreaming at the level of MA of CIP EQUAL (MoLSA)

Within mainstreaming, MA for example attempts to publish project outcomes at web sites and further enforce them at the national level while the respective expert background papers are prepared by NSS. The expert level of the prepared expert background papers to a great extent depends on the wide range of focus of activities within CIP EQUAL, which was positively affected in particular by a greater engagement of external experts/expert guarantors by individual NTNs. Worse knowledge of NSS employees in certain very specific areas solved within the projects of CIP EQUAL might be compensated by the very laying down of the expert guaranty of the selected expert for the respective NTN. In general, the vertical mainstreaming falls within the responsibility of MA that should convey various

contacts and options of meeting with representatives from the decision-making sphere while these activities were performed to a greater extent in particular in the first half of 2008.

As concerns issues of vertical management, a conference (or a fair trade of innovations respectively) was organised in April 2008 – the conference lasted two days. Validated products were presented there and the objective was to increase awareness of these activities (conference proceedings). In addition, a database of good and bad practice was prepared – examples of products with their characterisation, respective composite books and likewise.

Current results of mainstreaming at the level of NSS

In terms of mainstreaming, there was a lack of interest on the side of public administration representatives in activities of CIP EQUAL at the beginning. At the beginning of the programme, MA could hardly provide extensive information about objectives as there was no relevant environment. At the beginning, a number of DPs did not understand at all what the mainstreaming principle actually means and therefore NSS employees focused on preparation of information handbooks (for mainstreaming and innovations) that introduced practical examples for better understanding. This activity was followed by information seminars and the essence of this principle was further explained within NTN.

Current results of mainstreaming at the level of NTNs

At the moment, mainstreaming strategies exist for individual NTNs (A–F, cross-section). At a time when individual NTNs were emerging, a workshop was organised when one explained what was actually concerned in NTN activities – representatives of DPs, public administration and others were invited to this workshop. Mainstreaming reports are provided by NSS at MA within “mainstreaming strategy assessment” (which inter alia includes the mentioned mainstreaming reports).

Main results and conclusions

The results of current assessment carried out in the form of desk-research, questionnaire research and structured interviews with selected DPs proved that in the course of the first period of CIP EQUAL realisation, the application of the vertical as well as horizontal mainstreaming principle resting in acquisition of active participation of policy-makers and important ministerial officials for solution of projects and preparation of innovative procedures posed a significant problem. At the time, DPs were not fully aware of the importance of mainstreaming, they did not have prepared and in particular verified in practice any mainstreaming strategies and procedures of enforcing the results of their project into policy and legislation.

In the next period, in particular in 2007, thanks to the common approach of MA (National Mainstreaming Strategy), NSS and NTNs (mainstreaming strategies of individual NTNs), one managed to substantially improve the situation and in particular to activate DPs to process and particularly apply the mainstreaming strategies. The standard of individual DPs is naturally not identical, which is reflected also in the quality of innovative products and in particular their application in practice and enforcement into local, regional and national policies.

As proven by the results of current work, supported by the results of research in particular DPs and examples of realised projects and developed innovative products as well as methods of their application in practice, DPs have reached an improvement in this area and they devote necessary attention to the mainstreaming principle. In a number of cases, thanks to personal contacts, one managed to cope also with vertical management at the local or regional level respectively. To a great extent, this is caused by the fact that officials and policy-makers at this level are closer to the people, they deal with specific problems of municipalities and towns, regions and cohesion regions and the direct application of CIP EQUAL results is easier at this level than at the national level where long-term influence and lobbying are important.

When applying in particular the vertical mainstreaming, NTN's have a role as consultants and advisors. In spring 2008, MA accepted partial responsibility for vertical mainstreaming (responsibility for vertical mainstreaming of developed products rests with individual DPs) and thereby tries to meet the general requirement of vertical mainstreaming, i.e. a coordinated approach to communication with prospective addressees of vertical mainstreaming. In this manner, complex assistance is provided to DPs upon procurement of contacts with relevant persons, important state officials as well as policy-makers, in particular at the national level (employees of ministries, MPs, senators) and one of the original recommendations from the previous evaluations concerning CIP EQUAL is met thereby, i.e. to have a much more strategic approach within the mainstreaming.

Recommendations

The performed research proved that DPs and NTN's mostly apply the mainstreaming principle as a targeted pressure on politicians and legislators through dissemination of examples of good practice and publication from their innovative activities in rather passive manners (press, publications, brochures, manuals, web sites and likewise). Active methods of influencing these persons still have not been used sufficiently, in particular in the form of active engagement in solution of problems as early as within the project realisation and in the form of direct and personal contact with them. Another important finding confirmed by the questionnaire research and structured interviews is the very poor use of mainstreaming at the national level, in particular when influencing policy-makers at the top level, which is caused by their non-availability and lack of time. It often happens that the evoked discussions or expert conferences and seminars, the main objective of which it to present innovative products and present their effects, are attended by their representatives who lack the necessary power and fail to pass the outcomes from the discussions and conferences to their superiors in a sufficient manner. From this summary, suggestions of the following recommendations follow:

- Continued support to the methodical management and active participation of MA in mainstreaming at the programme level also after termination of activities of DPs and CIP EQUAL;
- Improvement of the provided support by the possibly newly emerged NTN's financed for example within HRE OP (in particular synergic effects between individual networks and entities);
- Application of CIP EQUAL experiences in the programme period 2007-2013 within HRE OP (national/programme level of mainstreaming).

5 Partnership Principle Evaluation

5.1 Introduction

Partnership is one of the fundamental CIP EQUAL principles. The key objective of this chapter is to assess the benefits of the partnership principle for the successful implementation of CIP EQUAL. The basic aspects of the evaluation performed within the framework of this part of the project were the results and the impacts of the mutual co-operation of different organisations in resolving the existing problems on the labour market within individual DP. The results are processed in terms of their usability by the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee when correcting programme fulfilment. The main emphasis lies on identifying the strengths and weaknesses related to the fulfilment of the above-mentioned principle and on formulating recommendations that can be deployed for the establishment of partnerships within the framework of relevant programmes in the period 2007 – 2013.

The benefit and the synergy effect of the partnership principle, as well as the efficiency and actual effectiveness of fulfilment are examined within evaluations. The basic evaluation questions for partnership principle evaluation may be connected with the main activities of this part of the evaluation. They include the following:

- What is the level of contribution of the partnership principle to the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities?
- What is the level to which the partnership principle reinforces/adds to the efficiency of other principles (empowerment, innovation, mainstreaming)?
- What is the level to which the partnership principle is being successfully fulfilled within the programme implementation from the point of view of:
 - The suitable partnership composition in relation to innovation development and enforcement?
 - The efficiency of partnership organisation and the decision-making mechanism settings?
 - The partnership communication mechanisms?

The European Commission glossary of CIP EQUAL terms defines the partnership principle as *one of the key principles of the EQUAL programme that connects various partners with the aim to create a common strategy within the development partnership*.¹⁰⁹ We may objectively state that the experience of Czech institutions and organisations of various types with the implementation of projects based on the partnership principle cannot be considered as significant, even at the level of the institutions dealing with the issue of fighting discrimination of various specifics. This is mainly due to historical development where the term “partnership” and its

¹⁰⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/about/glossary-en_en.cfm

application in practice was unknown to different institutions involved in the solution of a common objective for a long period of time.

From this point of view, there are a number of approaches and concepts of the term “partnership” in the CR, which also manifest themselves within project implementation. This thematic part of CIP EQUAL evaluation therefore focuses on the actual functioning of partners and assesses the contribution of the existing DP. One of the main theses subject to verification is, among others, the differentiation between partnership as a necessary CIP EQUAL tool and common co-operation based on a client-contractor relationship, as well as the influence of centralised and decentralised forms of management, etc. Moreover, the aim of this chapter is to aid in the establishment of partnerships effectively functioning not only on the project platform in the CR.

5.2 Evaluation Questions and Main Answers

What is the level of contribution of the partnership principle to the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities?

The partnership principle aids in resource and experience sharing among individual partners, thereby allowing the individual DP to achieve higher objectives in the form of new products, which could not be achieved separately in most cases (only by individual partners). Through partnership, the DP satisfies its own interests and at the same time, it makes use of its advantages in favour of target groups or the region. The effect of DP project execution is not only the achievement of project outputs. The common execution of a project supports long-term co-operation among partners in successive periods and on additional tasks associated with the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities. In the long term, CIP EQUAL aids various institutions in gaining experience from the execution of common objectives. The impacts of the programme and especially of the partnership principle are therefore more wide-scale and will probably manifest themselves after the programme termination by establishing new partnerships in the CR based on areas other than project platforms (for details see Chapter 5.4).

What is the level to which the partnership principle reinforces/adds to the efficiency of other principles (empowerment, innovation, mainstreaming)?

Additional evaluation questions:

- How does the successful fulfilment of the partnership principle influence the reinforcement of other CIP EQUAL principles?

The partnership principle aids in the sharing of information among the involved institutions and in their mutual co-operation. Thus, it also facilitates the fulfilment of other principles. The impact with the best evaluation from DP is the impact on innovations – in the opinion of both CIP EQUAL beneficiaries and their partners. Nevertheless, statistical analyses suggest nothing that could be denoted as an “ideal structure” of DP. Co-operation initiative and potential on the part of individual DP members is more significant than the DP legal form or material orientation. As regards mainstreaming products, organisations providing employment services prove as

significant in statistical terms. Their significance is based on the positive effect on the quantity of mainstreaming products. (Partial analyses are detailed in Chapters 5.5 and 5.6.)

- May a poorly functioning partnership actually affect any of the remaining principles and are there such DP examples in the CR?

With regard to the DP examples in the Czech Republic, we may say that potentially poorly functioning (due to whatever reason) DP have been “eliminated” in the course of project preparation when the involved institutions refined their concepts concerning the form of executed activities. Disagreements relating to the issue of activity direction were resolved by many organisations by withdrawing from the project preparation. In many cases, the execution of Action 1 aided in resolving issues in DP, which would otherwise appear within the execution of CIP EQUAL Action 2 or 3. Nonetheless, despite its implementation, some partnerships encountered problems also within Action 2 and 3, e.g. in several cases, a partner withdrew from a project during its implementation phase due to not being able to identify with the primary idea of the project. Additional problematic aspects relating to partnership fulfilment are indicated in Chapter 5.4.

- How does the partnership principle increase the quality of the fulfilment of other CIP EQUAL principles?

The most significant effect manifests itself in the case of empowerment where, unlike other principles, the success rate of partnership fulfilment is more visible (communication with target group). Direct empowerment results in high communication and decision-making costs. Thus, the partnership principle impacts may be felt also in the DP economic area and it facilitates target group involvement (though figurative) in DP decision-making. With other principles, it enhances their qualitative fulfilment and long-term sustainability. The answer is based on the analyses provided in Chapter 5.5.

- What is the added value of the partnership principle when enforcing the innovation, empowerment, and mainstreaming principles?

In relation to empowerment, partnership serves as a tool mediating target group opinions through a particular partner organisation. Where more individuals from target groups were involved thanks to partner organisations, more innovation and validated products were also observed. In the case of mainstreaming, partnership is significant in terms of experience and information sharing. The evaluation team assessed mainstreaming (especially vertical) as one of the activities that are the most difficult to execute by DP. Information sharing among partners aids in the mutual enhancement of professional capacities of the partners. Partnerships comprising employment service organisations usually achieved lower average DP costs expended on mainstreaming products. In relation to innovation, partnership represents an aspect, which aids in verifying innovation from the various perspectives of the involved partners. For a more detailed analysis and conclusions, see Sub-Chapter 5.4.6, and Chapters 5.5 and 5.6.

- What are the differences in the fulfilment of the partnership principles during individual rounds?

With the continuing rounds of CIP EQUAL, we may say that some selected partnerships of organisations have stabilised and their mutual co-operation is effected with a more intense link to target group needs and impacts on the labour market. Many organisations involved in the

EQUAL Community Initiative have recognised the advantages of partnership co-operation and they seek mutual co-operation opportunities themselves. The first round of EQUAL implemented under Phare 2002 thus contributed to gaining relevant experience, to learning to co-operate with various institutions on a single objective, and it allowed the partners to partially verify mutual confidence and actually try out co-operation. Many institutions acquired significant social capital thereby and some have decided to continue in co-operation during the second round of CIP EQUAL in the CR (as implied by structured interviews).

What is the level of fulfilment of the partnership principle in terms of the suitability of the DP composition in relation to innovation development and enforcement?

The completed analyses and evaluations imply that in the structure of most DP in the CR allows them to create products aimed at developing and enforcing innovations in the area of discrimination and inequalities on the labour market (see Chapter 5.6). A number of DP, however, would welcome the participation of more public institutions that would aid namely in their application in practice. In general, a change in the partner structure would not significantly affect the progress of development of innovation products in most cases, and the present DP composition is sufficient for the fulfilment of all CIP EQUAL requirements (see questions 3.01C02 and 3.01C03 in the questionnaire survey). As regards the partnership structure, it is not possible to say that there is a general formula for creating an ideal partnership or with respect to the structure of individual thematic areas (tested by means of a regression analysis). The DP success rate is largely dependent on the initiative of individual DP members and their willingness to co-operate. Partial analyses are detailed in Chapter 5.6.

What is the level of fulfilment of the partnership principle in terms of the efficiency of the DP organisation and the decision-making mechanism settings?

Most DP deploy a centralised management model to manage the whole partnership, particularly in terms of securing financial flows, observing project schedules, or their approach towards MA. Nevertheless, in relation to work in workgroups or steering committees, the configuration of the decision-making mechanisms is based on a more decentralised system where each partner may contribute to or interfere with the decision-making process. This involves delegation of specific competences and responsibilities to the remaining partnership members. The vast majority of institutions involved in the DP are fully satisfied with the configuration of the DP decision-making mechanisms and/or they have no reservations to the same (see question 3.01C06 of the questionnaire survey). Concurrently, however, it was ascertained that a quarter of the partner organisations do not take an active part in the decision-making process (even if they have the possibility to do so). The evaluator is convinced that this casts certain doubts on the fulfilment of the partnership principle and that such cases constitute (partial) co-operation among institutions. Passiveness in the decision-making process was particularly observed among public administration institutions (for details see Chapter 5.7). This may be given by the position and the role of these institutions in the project. Usually, this may more likely involve consulting activities, which are controlled by them based on their experience as the main beneficiary, and project activities.

What is the level of fulfilment of the partnership principle in terms of communication mechanisms in the partnership?

The completed analyses evidence that the continuously growing experience in applying the partnership principle in the Czech Republic positively support the intensity of communication and the art of co-operation (see Chapter 5.8). In addition, it is namely the communication system that, among other things, contributes to the fulfilment of the partnership principle in the course of project execution. At present, most of the involved institutions are fully satisfied with the configuration of the communication mechanisms and receive all necessary information concerning the further procedure of work, as well as other project activities (see questions 3.01C09 and 3.01C10 in the questionnaire survey). With a view to the fact that most institutions in DP have co-operated in the past (e.g. during the first round of EQUAL or in other areas), their present communication is therefore easier. In a large number of cases, we may observe repeated co-operation of familiar key partners in DP who have successfully executed several other projects. They know each other well, their systems, communication and co-operation mechanisms are well configured from previous projects, and they successfully develop them. More details may be found in Chapter 5.7 and especially in Chapter 5.8.

5.3 Conditions for the Partnership Principle in the CR

In the CR, the theme of the partnership principle began appearing more frequently in connection with its accession to the EU. In this respect, the issue of Structural Funds, in particular, brought about the need to introduce and implement the principle.¹¹⁰

As the public sector, non-profit organisations and private companies had little experience with the implementation of partnership, this term was understood in various ways. One of the consequences was the suspicion of the Office for the Protection of Competition¹¹¹ that the project partners were actually contractors trying in this way to evade the law on public procurement. This situation was uneasy particularly for CIP EQUAL, as partnership is one of the cornerstones of the programme. The situation was finally settled by negotiations between OPC, MRD CR and MoLSA CR. Nevertheless, no legal framework has been established so far that would define the issue of partnership in the CR.¹¹² It should be pointed out that the partnership principle definitions provided in official guidebooks of the MA are very general.¹¹³ They thus give way to ambiguous concepts of partnership, which are, of course, augmented by the historical development in the CR where the partnership concept has appeared only in the course of the period of transformation.

¹¹⁰ This is valid for other policies as well, e.g. for flood control measures.

¹¹¹ Opinions of the Office for the Protection of Competition, ref. 5581/05-100 and ref. 131/2005-100.

¹¹² In a broader sense, this topic is a part of the issue of the relation of direct democracy and representative democracy and the participation of citizens in the political decision-making process. In this regard, the Czech Government has taken cognisance of the Proposal of the procedures for introducing the methodology of engaging the public in the preparation of government documents through its Decree No. 879/2007.

¹¹³ For example: the Concise Guide to CIP EQUAL Principles for Development Partnerships of 2007 or the Guidebook for Beneficiaries for Actions 2 and 3.

In a number of studies (e.g. Dahan 2006, EURO SERVICE GROUP 2006), the partnership principle is closely related to empowerment. This is because many actors do not differentiate between these two principles and combine them together. A logical explanation is that many institutions in DP mediate information and target group needs, and attempt to act in their interest.

Dahan (2006, p. 62) notes that EU Member States have not reached a common understanding of what exactly the partnership principle means. At the same time, he notes that certain shifts occur at the EU level in the area of partnership implementation, and the methodology is being harmonised. Transfer of experience helps in assuming the attitude to this principle and to its further dissemination. In some countries, conditions for co-operation have been better in the long-term and social partners have more experience and easier ways to fulfil this principle. This situation, however, results from long-term traditions. These traditions are not rooted in the CR and this implies some problematic aspects in relation to the fulfilment of the partnership principle.

5.4 Supporting Factors and Obstacles Inhibiting the Fulfilment of Partnership

5.4.1 Development Partnership Size

In connection with enforcing innovations, the size of DP may be considered rather as an obstacle, as both the previous evaluation reports and current data and information indicate that too many partners in a DP do not necessarily have to be effective when it comes to the implementation of innovative approaches at various levels, particularly as regards content and processes. This is evident particularly in the case of DP with decentralised management. DP with a higher number of partners are more difficult to control. We may therefore say that a high number of partners in DP may lead to worsened functioning of the particular DP. The key role, however, is played by beneficiaries who may cope with the situation even with a large number of partners provided that they have sufficient experience. Large partnerships may face problems with accounting for the costs of individual partners (e.g. difficult collection of documents, divergent outputs and their coordination, etc.). For this reason, immense demands are placed on the project leader who is forced to lay down necessary rules. An example of the administrative demand placed on collecting documents and decision-making is shown in territorial self-administrative units. If they are a part of a DP, all issues have to be approved by the assembly and the municipal (town) council and this may result in delays in the implementation of a project. Another problem associated with a large DP is the passiveness of partial partners who fulfil only one of the activities in the course of a project. This situation occurs especially in the case of DP with a higher number of partners (11 and more). The perception of project authors at the beginning of CIP EQUAL implementation was such that the more partners a DP had the better. This opinion persists up to the present as confirmed by DP representatives during structured interviews.

In the opinion of the evaluator, the number of five or six partners seems ideal in terms of project management.¹¹⁴ At present, the range of the number of partners in the existing DP in

¹¹⁴ The evaluator's opinion is supported by e.g. sociological research, which indicates that people (groups) are capable of reaching a consensus up to the maximum number of 6 persons. A higher

the CR is quite wide. The smallest DP participating in CIP EQUAL has three partners and the largest DP has 40 partners. The average DP size is approximately 10 partners (10.26).

With the aid of data from the monitoring system, which characterise individual DP in relation to their size, assigned grant, as well as other indicators, a correlation analysis has been conducted, which offers interesting results. The connection between the funds allocated for Action 1, 2 and 3 and the size of the partnership was assessed. The results imply that there is no apparent dependence between these indicators. In general, higher funds are not allocated to DP larger in number. A slightly more positive correlation indicating that larger DP received a higher grant may be observed only within Action 2. The dependence is not significant, though. Within Action 1 and 3, on the contrary, such dependence cannot be proved at all and the allocated funds were not dependent on the partnership size.

Table 40: Correlation relations between the grant amount and the DP size in the Czech Republic

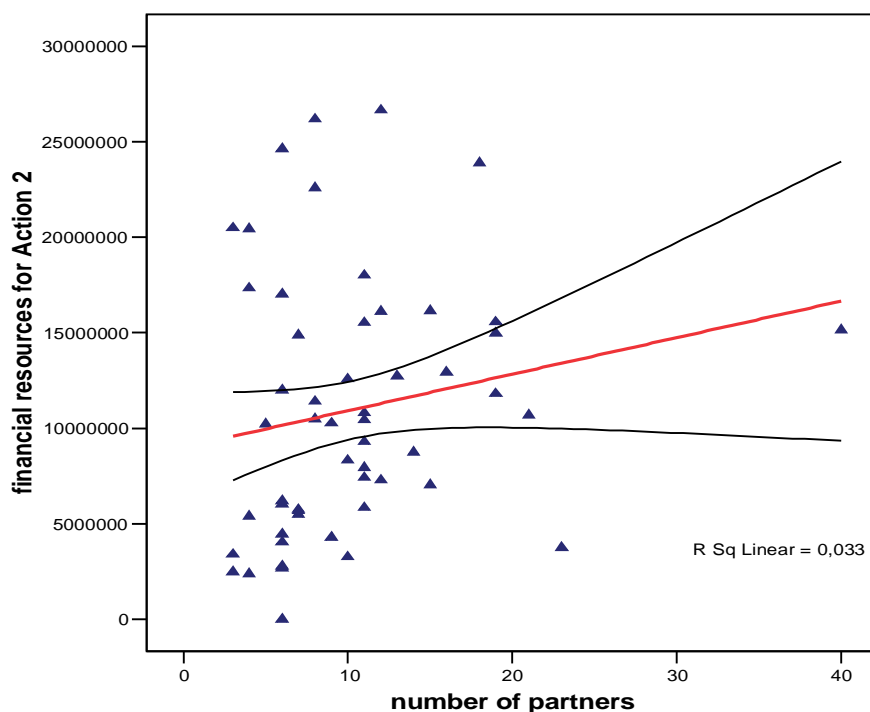
		Financial resources for Action 1	Financial resources for Action 2	Financial resources for Action 3	Number of partners
Financial resources for Action 1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.365(**)	0.009	0.245
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.007	0.950	0.075
Financial resources for Action 2	Correlation Coefficient	0.365(**)	1.000	0.239	0.293(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007		0.082	0.031
Financial resources for Action 3	Correlation Coefficient	0.009	0.239	1.000	0.220
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.950	0.082		0.110
Number of partners	Correlation Coefficient	0.245	0.293(*)	0.220	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.075	0.031	0.110	

**** The correlation is significant at the significance level of 99% * The correlation is significant at the significance level of 95%**

Source: MSSF Monit data, statistical software outputs

number is subsequently associated with higher decision-making costs (growing in a geometric progression). An ideal DP structure in the CR was also discussed with NSS representatives and also in this case the proposed number of 5 or 6 partners was supported.

Diagram 4: Financial resources (in CZK) allocated to individual DP within Action 2 and their relation to the partnership size



Source: MSSF Monit data, statistical software outputs

5.4.2 Changes in Partnership Composition

Withdrawal of a partner or of several partners from a partnership may be denoted as a distinct obstacle – once again with reference to structured interviews, available material and information – particularly in cases where these partners performed a key activity, the essence of which is fundamental for the project, either from the point of view of working with target groups, or the innovativeness of the project outputs. DP had to deal with such situations by accepting a new partner or by internal project changes, and by delegating responsibilities to other partners. From the very beginning of Action 2 and 3 in the second round of CIP EQUAL, partners withdrew from 15 different DP in the CR and this is a relatively high number. Nevertheless, it is not possible to confirm that the withdrawal of a partner from a DP was associated with the number of partners in a DP. Instead, problems could be identified in the different “original expectations” of the individual partner that were not achieved. The arising problems were the result of e.g. insufficient project management on the part of the DP head who had often failed to submit monitoring reports, along with interim payment requests, due to which the partners were facing cash flow difficulties. Other issues involved e.g. changes in the assembly of deputies after elections in Havířov, where the new assembly did not consider the project activities as a priority and withdrew from the project (other partners withdrew for the same reasons, e.g. the town of Frýdek-Místek). In the opinion of the evaluator, when new partnerships are formed within operational programmes in the CR, it will be necessary to thoroughly discuss all planned activities with individual actors. This will support communication and determine whether the partners are truly able and willing to execute the activities. In addition, potential withdrawals of partners from DP

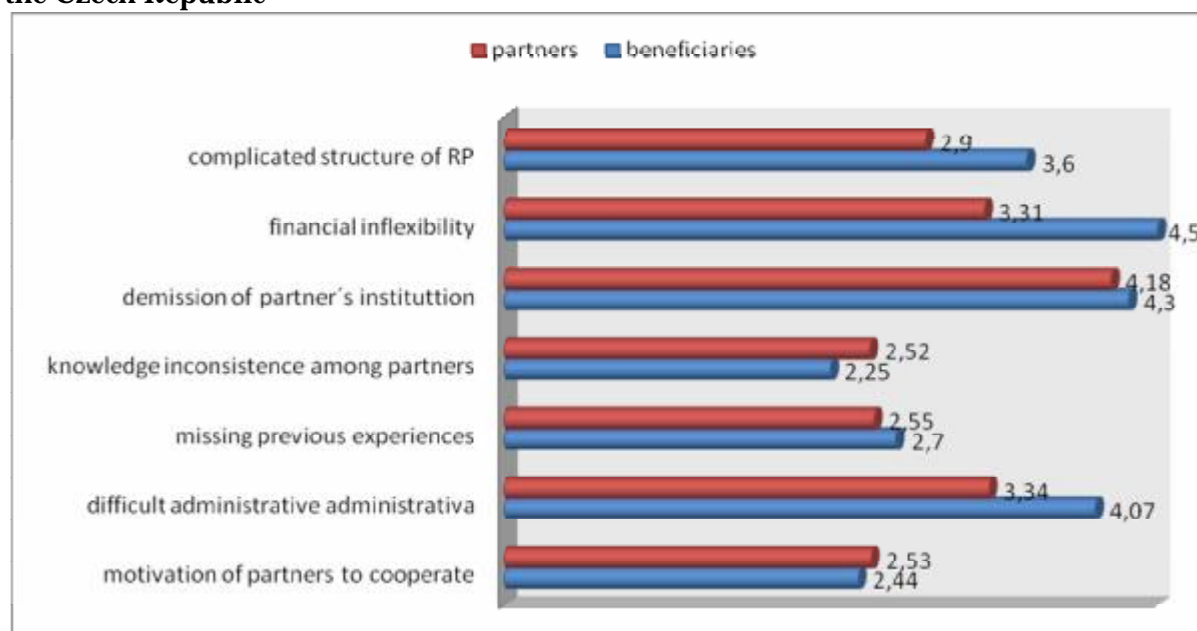
may be avoided thereby. On the other hand, it should be noted that in the new programming period, partnership will no longer be compulsory. Moreover, the period between a call for proposals for projects and the submission of projects is usually not more than 3 months. Institutions applying the partnership principle will thus be required to elaborate the project intent prior to a call for a new proposal being made. This may have a positive impact on the deliberativeness of proposals. From the point of view of the MA making the call for proposals, it would be advisable to publish a schedule of calls for the upcoming year in advance. This could ensure higher effectiveness when preparing project intents and a schedule of the necessary steps and activities within the framework of partnership establishment.

5.4.3 Administrative and Financial Demandingness

The project paperwork, comprehensive monitoring, the submission of monitoring reports and the financial inflexibility associated therewith are still considered by DP as the major and most frequently encountered problems within the fulfilment of the partnership principle. These results are clearly implied by the questionnaire survey and some structured interviews. However, it should be pointed out that the situation is better than at the beginning of the early functioning period of CIP EQUAL. This is due to the growing experience of the individual DP members and particularly of their leaders, for whom such administrative requirements have more or less become a “routine”. A deduction may also be made that, in the course of implementation, DP, NSS and MA were able to set up such processes that facilitate increased efficiency of their work, better mutual communication, and regular contact. Structured interviews namely demonstrate good experience with NSS during Action 2 and 3. Nonetheless, despite these positive outputs (particularly flowing from structured interviews), a major share of DP indicated in the questionnaire that the administrative load and financial inflexibility were still immense – even though they were able to tackle them much better than at the beginning of the project implementation. It is also possible to point to the different attitude of beneficiaries and partial partners. Main grant beneficiaries are more sceptical in these cases and this is given by the higher demands and responsibility, which they bear.

From the evaluator’s point of view, the negative results and the mentioned obstacles to the fulfilment of the partnership principle seem to be associated with certain persistence of opinions of the DP because administrative and financial issues were more apparent at the beginning of the implementation of CIP EQUAL projects (see the previous two interim CIP EQUAL evaluation reports).

Diagram 5: The main problems hindering the fulfilment of the partnership principle in the Czech Republic



Note: The values express the average rating assigned by all respondents from DP, 1 = no problems, 6 = essential problem inhibiting the fulfilment of the partnership principle

Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

5.4.4 Partnership Structure

The table below describes the current structure of partner organisations involved in CIP EQUAL in the CR according to individual thematic areas and/or measures. It is obvious that the distribution based on the organisation type is associated with the thematic area and thus, with the executed project intent. Public administration bodies are most frequently involved in thematic areas 2 and 5, which concern overcoming racism and xenophobia on the labour market and/or supporting lifelong learning and processes facilitating the employment of individuals from disadvantaged and discriminated groups on the labour market. As regards involvement of educational institutions, the highest relative share is again observed in thematic areas 2, 5 and 7. Overall, we may say that on average each DP attempted to involve some educational institution. The only exception is Measure 4.IV. Professional organisations are not very common in Czech DP and this applies even more to trade union organisations, which are involved only exceptionally. A question remains, however, as to the reasons of this relatively low participation. A different situation may be observed among enterprises and NGOs, which belong among frequently involved entities. The relatively high share of private enterprise was participating in thematic areas 6 and 7, and this corresponds to their contextual orientation. Averagely, a private enterprise is involved in all the measures in most DP. The highest average number of non-profit organisations participates in thematic area 8 (Measure 4.III), yet the generally high number of NGOs in Czech DP is also worth mentioning.

Table 41: The structure of organisations involved in CIP EQUAL in the CR according to their type

Thematic area	Measure	Number of DP	Public bodies		Educational institutions		Professional organisations		Trade union organisations		Employment services		Enterprises		NGO	
			absolute	average	absolute	average	absolute	average	absolute	average	absolute	average	absolute	average	absolute	average
1	1.I	13	25	1.9	28	2.2	5	0.4	1	0.1	21	1.62	13	1.0	57	4.4
	1.II	4	2	0.5	3	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	1	0.3	9	2.3
2	1.III	2	6	3.0	13	6.5	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0	7	3.5
3	2.I	13	10	0.8	15	1.2	4	0.3	1	0.1	14	1.08	18	1.4	14	1.1
4	2.III	9	15	1.7	9	1.0	5	0.6	0	0.0	2	0.22	10	1.1	13	1.4
	2.IV	1	0	0.0	2	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	1	1.0	5	5.0
5	3.I	11	39	3.5	29	2.6	6	0.5	0	0.0	10	0.91	10	0.9	20	1.8
	3.II	1	7	7.0	3	3.0	1	1.0	1	1.0	0	0	0	0.0	2	2.0
6	3.III	4	2	0.5	7	1.8	11	2.8	1	0.3	3	0.75	6	1.5	9	2.3
7	4.I	3	8	2.7	10	3.3	1	0.3	0	0.0	4	1.33	5	1.7	11	3.7
8	4.III	2	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0	2	1.0	12	6.0
	4.IV	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	2	1.0	7	3.5
9	5.I	3	1	0.3	3	1.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	3	1	1	0.3	5	1.7
	5.II	1	1	1.0	1	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	1	1.0
Total		69	117		124		35		5		58		69		172	

Source: MSSF Monit data (data as of 13 June 2008), own calculations

The evaluation team performed statistical analyses of the MSSF Monit data (see Annex 14) in order to verify the relationship between the achieved project output indicators¹¹⁵ and the participation of individual partners in DP. Based on these analyses, a conclusion may be made that an ideal partnership composition cannot be generally prescribed, not even according to the individual thematic areas. DP results are dependent on the willingness and initiative of individual DP organisations rather than on their composition type.

During the next step, the potential influence on developed products and on other project results was monitored by way of a correlation analysis. Such a statistical method was also used to evaluate the existing DP, whereas the main monitored indicator was the number of involved institutions according to individual types and not only their presence. The results imply that DP containing a higher number of educational institutions have the strongest influence on the number of developed products. It is therefore probable that involvement of educational organisations has a more positive impact on the developed products than of other organisations. A similarly strong dependence is also manifested by public administration institutions.¹¹⁶ This fact is also confirmed by structured interviews conducted with selected DP. The influence of public organisations may be more significant especially when applying products in practice. On the other hand, the analysis did not prove the significant influence of a higher number of NGOs on the number of developed products. This too, however, may be considered as a certain result as the functioning of many NGOs in the CR had been denoted as problematic in the long-term, namely in connection with financial and personnel resources of these organisations. Therefore, even the higher number of NGOs involved in Czech DP does not mean that the DP would generally create more products.

The questionnaire survey and statistical analyses suggest a relationship between partnership success and how often the partners are informed in due time and included in decision-making.¹¹⁷ This relationship is logical and it was verified by the questionnaire survey respondents themselves.

5.4.5 Role of Individual Organisation Types in DP

The above-indicated information implies that the following types of partner organisation are the most frequent members of Czech DP:

- Public administration institutions,
- Non-government non-profit organisations,
- Private firms.

Public Administration Institutions

¹¹⁵ Indicators of the quantity of the developed products, innovation products, validated products, the number of target group members involved, etc. The system data are dated to 12 June 2008.

¹¹⁶ Statistical analysis results cannot be generalised with respect to the situation in Czech DP. Nevertheless, they suggest certain regularity, which may be observed and further examined within thematic evaluations focused solely on the partnership principle.

¹¹⁷ For details see annex.

Public administration institutions play an essential and specific role in partnerships in the CR. Their role is vital in terms of determining the basic principles and strategies and their use, providing information and partial project inputs in the form of identifying the most relevant needs and their solution. From the evaluator's point of view, involvement of these institutions provides distinct benefits. In addition, this applies to both the national level (state administration institutions) and – according to the range of project activities and project scope – the regional and local level (self-administrative bodies – regions and municipalities). On the other hand, it should be mentioned that passiveness in the decision-making processes was observed among some of the involved public administration institutions.

Non-Government Non-Profit Organisations

Their role in the DP in the CR is also quite significant. As they represent a decisive form of civic initiative, they contribute to the project by providing the necessary amount of suggestions, ideas, and innovation “from below”, and thereby, they markedly enrich the project. Their increased flexibility and adaptability is of key importance as they undoubtedly bring adequate motivation and objective setting that are vital in practice. For NGOs, CIP EQUAL also represents a considerable source of experience and professional growth, particularly in the area of internal communication and management of all kinds, as well as an important source of funding.

In some cases, however, the immaturity and insufficient experience in transnational project management or paperwork that is more demanding may present a certain difficulty for NGOs and may dissuade them from involving in CIP EQUAL. In other cases, a major role is played by the language barrier (when communicating with foreign partners). Nevertheless, the situation is gradually improving and we may find a number of experienced implementers/beneficiaries at a professional (in the best sense of the word) level among NGOs. It is essential to ensure that their numbers are continuously growing.

Private Firms

Private firms are a fitting complement to partnerships established by the previous two types of entities. They contribute to the project mechanisms by adding the perspective of commercial principles and they play a significant role by facilitating an employer's perspective with respect to various issues. Additional areas of their involvement include consulting and agency activities, namely in the sphere of education, transfer of knowledge, and practical implementation of some of their principles and models where the private firms are otherwise inhibited by economic criteria.

Foreign Partners

The role of foreign partners most frequently concerns expert services, transfer of experience and good practice to new Member States and candidate states where a certain gap still exists in the area of know how exploitation and introduction of some of the relevant principles in practice. This gap is being successfully filled thanks to CIP EQUAL. Its additional major contribution lies in increasing the effectiveness of the activities of all

entities participating in Czech DP through utilising foreign experience and knowledge already applied abroad. Apart from this role, foreign partners also serve as a source of information for Czech DP when a multilateral viewpoint is necessary in relation to any issue or a situation analysis. This is because developed DP outputs (tools and mechanisms) need to be compared as regards their application under the different and specific conditions of individual states, and their implementation needs to be tested in and adjusted according to conditions that do not exist in a particular state of the beneficiary.

Table 42: The number of institutions involved in DP in total and as grant beneficiaries (main partners)

	Number of main partners	Relative number of main partners (in %)
Public bodies	7	10.00
Educational institutions	3	4.29
Professional organisations	2	2.86
Employer unions	0	0.00
Trade union organisations	2	2.86
Employment services	0	0.00
Enterprises	19	27.14
NGO	15	21.43
Associations	22	31.43
Total	69	100

Source: Monit IS (data relate to 13 June 2008)

The relative number of main partners (in relation to the total number of DP in the CR) evidences intense activity among private firms and NGOs. With respect to future thematically oriented partnership principle evaluations, an assessment of the successful functioning of individual DP in relation to different main partners seems as an interesting aspect.

5.4.6 Fulfilment of the Partnership Principle

The partnerships established within CIP EQUAL practically fulfil the tasks for which the partnership principle was adopted in this programme. Institutions communicate at national and international levels with the aim to share experiences, establish new contacts, expand transnational co-operation among various types of entities.

In a large number of cases, we may observe repeated co-operation of familiar key partners in Czech DP who have successfully executed several other projects. They usually are key partners and project initiators. They know each other well, their systems and co-operation mechanisms are well configured from previous projects, and they successfully develop them. As a rule, they began co-operating during the first round of Community Initiative EQUAL

(and/or other programmes), which clearly implies their positive role with respect to the existing functioning relationships. Moreover, the high number of members of current DP evidences an increase in the number of (partial) members, in addition to the mentioned key partners. The functioning and configuration of the decision-making mechanisms, as well as other aspects of current DP are further evaluated in Chapters 5.6 and 5.7. In general, we may say the Community Initiative EQUAL aids various institutions in gaining experience from the achievement of common objectives in the long term. The impacts of the partnership principle within the framework of CIP EQUAL are more wide-scale and will probably manifest themselves after the programme termination by establishing new partnerships in the CR based on areas other than project platforms.

The partnership principle facilitates resource and experience sharing among individual partners, thereby allowing the individual DP to achieve higher objectives in the form of new products, which could not be achieved separately in most cases (only by individual partners). It should be underlined that in many DP, this represents a considerable shift in the understanding of partnership as a concept for the development of innovation products.

Main Benefits of the Methods of Fulfilment of the Partnership Principle for the Development of New Tools^{1 1 8}

Regular mutual communication and meetings – They represent a necessary precondition for the successful execution of project and achievement of project outputs (“information sharing is the essence”);

Conferences – Extension of outputs and results, involvement of other entities, increasing informedness, enhancing the image of the project and its bearers (beneficiaries and partners);

Empowerment – Increasing the efficiency of activities, division of tasks according to the potential and abilities of individual partners (it may also lead to increased paperwork and demands on partners and it thus requires their due preparedness);

Joint analyses – Widening the spectrum of information with new elements, considering the international aspect, extending views and positions according to partner types;

Common consulting groups – Upgrading partnership to a higher level, improved coordination of different perspectives and viewpoints, higher operability when solving specific issues, mutual enrichment.

5.5 Partnership Added Value

5.5.1 Internal Factors Affecting Partnership Added Value

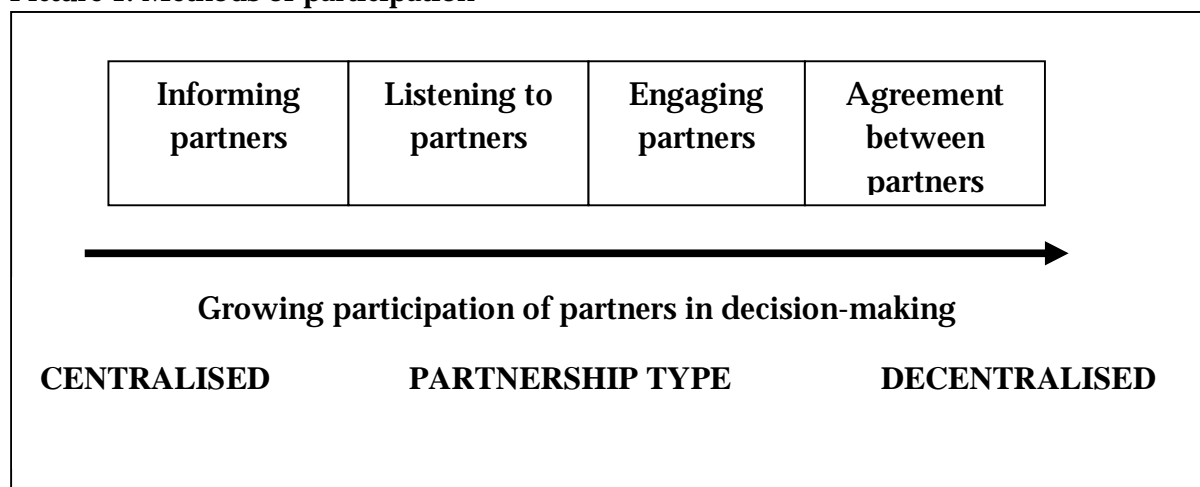
The success rate and the long-term sustainability of partnership outcomes are influenced by the form of partnership execution and the intensity of participation of partners. Higher participation brings about longer sustainability of the partnership outcomes. Nevertheless, it is more demanding on the organisational and communication abilities of the head organisation.

¹¹⁸ The methods of fulfilment of the partnership principle represent a cross-sectional theme and as such, they are detailed in the individual subsections of this evaluation.

From this point of view, a shift is anticipated in the Czech Republic towards a decentralised form of partnership (for details see Chapter 5.7) with growing competencies of the partnership organisations. At present, it is particularly obvious in the willingness of a number of DP organisations to co-operate with institutions, which they originally considered as their competitors. Nevertheless, the willingness to co-operate is only the first step for a successful DP. Partial analyses of Czech DP identified a number of inconsistent outcomes, e.g. in relation to decision-making mechanisms, slightly different attitudes among partners and beneficiaries, etc., which point to certain immaturity of some DP. This may be mainly affected by the rather short-lived tradition of implementing the partnership principle in the CR or by less experience of the partners, (for details see following chapters) etc.

The picture below describes the level of participation of partners in decision-making and the impact on results.

Picture 1: Methods of participation



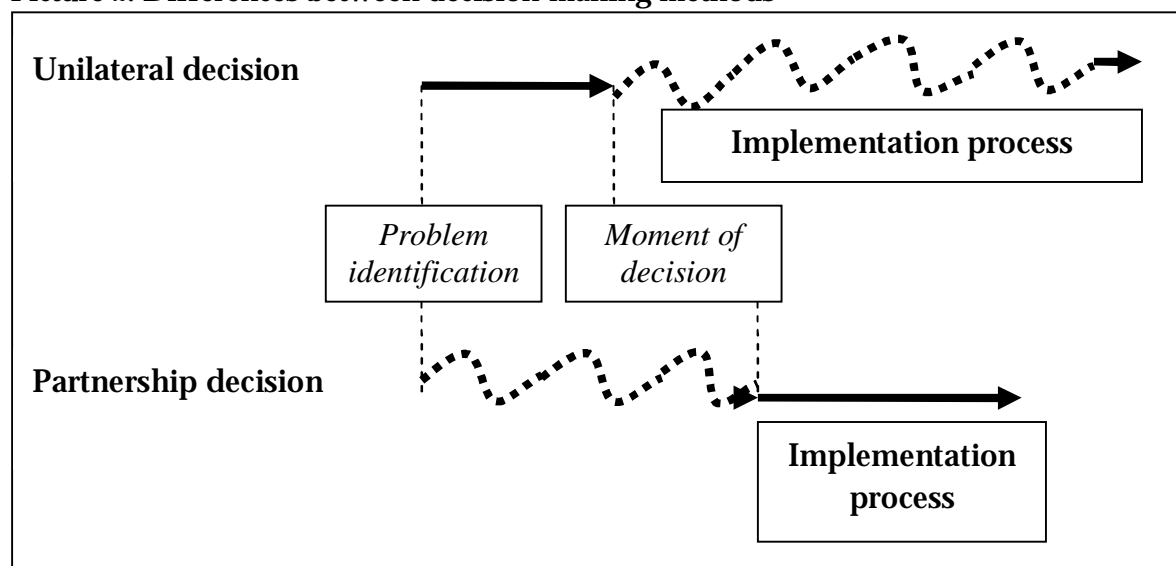
Source: Creighton (2005), own data

A significant factor influencing partnership functioning is not only the number of involved actors but also the number of persons who are affected by decisions and activities. The impact time horizon also plays an important role.

The following diagram depicts a situation when the process of making a decision in a partnership is more time demanding, yet its implementation is faster. In this case, an allowance is made for time and consensus costs, as well as costs expended on enforcing a decision. As regards a unilateral decision, the decision-making itself is easier and the application of such decision in practice usually clashes with the interests of other actors.

The decentralised form of decision-making is quite significant when deciding in the long-term as it may reduce the costs associated with the implementation of a decision, and the decision itself is applied into practice faster. With respect to CIP EQUAL principles, we may presume that the decentralised form would lead to their successful fulfilment. With a view to the fact that the DP projects in the CR are currently in their final phase, their conceivable continuation should be resolved. It is probable that DP who have been already using elements of the decentralised form will function even better in the period 2007 – 2013.

Picture 2: Differences between decision-making methods



Source: Creighton (2005), own data

5.5.2 Partnership Influence on the Fulfilment of Other CIP EQUAL Principles in the CR

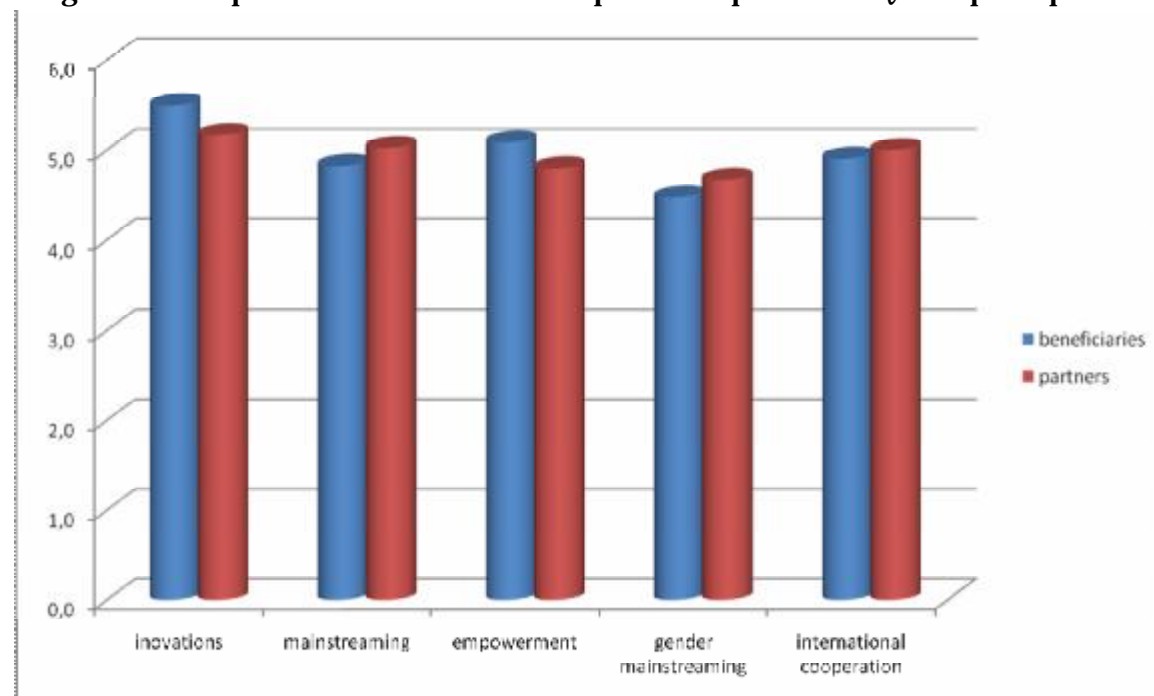
The responses of the DP actors imply their “slightly optimistic” perception of the fulfilment of the partnership principle and its contribution to other CIP EQUAL principles. Respondents considered innovation as the area most markedly benefited by co-operation, while influence on gender mainstreaming was rated the “weakest”. The survey results clearly indicate that the difference of opinions among beneficiaries and their partners regarding the contribution of partnership to the fulfilment of CIP EQUAL principles was immaterial at the CIP EQUAL level.¹¹⁹ We may thus conclude that the perception of CIP EQUAL outcomes is the same with both groups of respondents.

Where feasible, a comparison of the perception of the fulfilment of the principles among individual DP was also conducted. In these cases, the situation in the area of mainstreaming and transnational co-operation was rated more positively by partners (on average by 0.67 and 0.6 points).¹²⁰ The average rating of the fulfilment of CIP EQUAL principles was always more positive among partners than among beneficiaries in their DP. Based on structured interviews conducted with beneficiaries, the evaluators believe that this is given by certain disbelief of the beneficiaries. This is because beneficiaries were often the ones to bear the burden of project administration in DP. In the survey, the beneficiaries realised the “price” that was being paid for the fulfilment of CIP EQUAL principles. Partners were able to concentrate more on material activities and their more optimistic responses may be deducted therefrom.

¹¹⁹ The comparison was made with respect to CIP EQUAL in general.

¹²⁰ In this case, the data relate to the responses of the particular beneficiary in a DP.

Diagram 6: Comparison of the influence of partnership on CIP EQUAL principles



Note: Value 6 = the method obviously initiated and aided in the application of other principles, 1= the principle had a markedly discouraging effect

Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

The table below indicates that the empowerment principle was the most sensitive to changes in the fulfilment of the partnership principle. Changes in partnership lead to more distinct changes in empowerment than in the case of other principles.

Table 43: Results of a regression analysis of the influence of the partnership principle on the quality of the implementation of other CIP EQUAL principles

Influence of partnership on principles:	Constant	Coefficient	Adjusted R ²
Innovation	1.778127	0.665351	0.43506
Mainstreaming	1.333188	0.646053	0.40882
Empowerment	0.486394	0.826685	0.6789
Gender mainstreaming	1.842151	0.621372	0.37721
Transnational co-operation	1.430499	0.632329	0.399101

Note: Own calculations, the model and individual factors utilise a 95% level of significance

Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

Empowerment

Involvement of organisations co-operating with target groups on a long-term basis represents the value added by a partnership to empowerment. It increases the effect on such target groups, as well as potentially expands the empowerment principle.

Dahan (2006, p. 73) notes, that the partnership alone provides no guarantee that the effects of DP will be actually implemented in those target groups which need it most, nevertheless, he also refers to the fact that partnerships have assisted in the involvement of organisations co-operating with the target groups, thus increasing their chances of involvement. This is particularly evident in the case of minor organisations without ambitions, personal and technical capacities to influence the systematic framework in a more significant manner.

The answers of the respondents and statistical analyses suggest a link between empowerment, the decision-making process structures, and the independence of the involved partners.¹²¹ Both these variables seem to be statistically significant and influence the success of empowerment (clearly organised decision-making processes and higher partner independence may increase the success rate of empowerment).¹²²

Innovation

Some authors (see Dahan 2006, p. 74) consider partnership alone as an innovation. Partnerships would not have grown to their present extent had they not been required by CIP EQUAL. Within structured interviews, Dahan's contention was unambiguously supported by all approached DP representatives.

Unlike other CIP EQUAL principles, DP see the influence of the partnership principle on innovation as most significant. A more in-depth analysis of the obtained responses implies that innovation was mostly affected by the ability of DP to clearly define their mutual and joint tasks (for details on the statistical analysis see Annex 11).

Mainstreaming

Dahan (2006) points to the fact that in many cases, informal relationships emerged between organisations within an originally formal partnership, leading subsequently to very important impacts on target groups. A DP that is sufficiently representative may easily implement the mainstreaming activities provided that the timing of the involvement of the respective partners is adequate. This fact is important with regard to the below-mentioned issue of lobbying, which tends to be based on informal bonds and contacts more frequently. This is apparent among Czech DP as well.

According to Dahan (2006, p. 75), two basic strategies may be found that correspond with the different traditions of the relationship between civil society and the public sector (politics). The former represents involvement of public sector representatives in DP. The latter, which is typical for Anglo-Saxon countries, represents lobbying to enforce opinions and procedures where, using these countries as examples, community and voluntary organisations were mobilised in DP due to their lobbying capabilities, whereby they contributed to mainstreaming the outcomes of the DP work. The Czech Republic selected the first path. One

¹²¹ Partner independence means the mutual relationship among partners and their ability to present their opinion on the resolved issue.

¹²² For details see annex.

of the underlying reasons were programmes and namely cost eligibility, which was configured according to the second alternative.

The decreased involvement of the public sector in the leading position in DP may lead to weaker mainstreaming in Action 3. It is possible to presume that active involvement could help to speed up the dissemination of the DP results and their application.¹²³ In this context, Dahan (2006, p. 62) underlines, based on several CIP EQUAL evaluations conducted in various EU Member States, that corresponding involvement of organisations belonging to both the public and private sector and their division to strategic and operational organisations would allow mobilising the respective partners at a moment when they could best help their DP.

As regards the relation of partnership and mainstreaming, Dahan (2006) recommends that mainstreaming should not be just a matter of the DP partners, but that corresponding structures should be created at the programme level as well. Based on experience gained through structured interviews and the questionnaire survey, the evaluation team recommends the MA to play a more significant role at the CR level, in particular in the area of vertical mainstreaming. Partnership organisations alone often lack sufficient authority to enforce their results in the political process. In this respect, the role of MoLSA CR seems to be essential. More details on this issue are provided in Chapters 4.4 to 4.6 hereof, which are dedicated to vertical mainstreaming.

A statistic analysis of the questionnaire survey results in the area of mainstreaming and various other factors affecting it implies that the highest statistical significance should be attributed to dependence of successful mainstreaming on the efficiency of the costs expended by DP.¹²⁴ A statistical analysis of MSSF Monit data shows the probable positive affect of involvement of employment service organisations on the quantity of mainstreaming products. Their statistical influence is based on increasing the quantity of mainstreaming products and on affecting the reduction of average costs expended on these products. It should be pointed out, however, that public administration representatives could not be remunerated from the project funds above the framework of their work responsibilities. This resulted in an incongruous situation where differences in the remuneration of public administration workers and other partner employees were criticised namely by the public administration workers. From this perspective, the above-mentioned positive effect of reducing average costs is unsustainable in the long term.

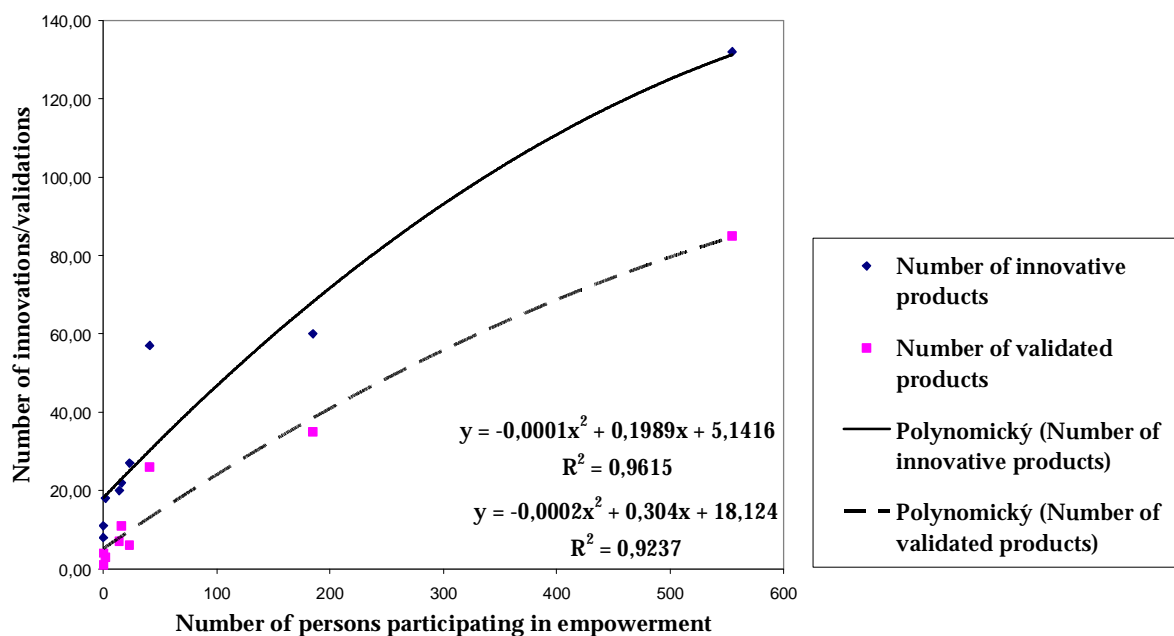
The questionnaire survey and structured interviews imply that a number of partners are involved in DP due to their contacts with target group members. The influence of partnership on target group involvement is clearly shown by an analysis of the number of persons participating in empowerment and its effect on the volume of innovations and validated products.¹²⁵ Particularly partners help contact target groups and involve them in project execution. For DP alone, continuous verification of the target group needs is relevant.

¹²³ The fact was also confirmed by DP representatives during structured interviews.

¹²⁴ For details see annex.

¹²⁵ At the individual DP level, these results are not as distinct due to major dispersion among individual DP.

Diagram 7: Influence of empowerment on innovation (according to thematic areas)



Source: MSSF Monit data (as of 11 April 2008), own calculations

5.6 Influence of Partnership and Its Composition in Relation to Enforcing Innovation and New Products

Partner Experience

At present, a number of DP is based on the main partner's long-term experience in co-operating with institutions that have become DP partners. This experience was gained by e.g. various forms of consultations, joint activities of the representatives of various types of organisations within inter-sector bodies, participation in thematically focused formal or informal events, etc. Furthermore, it was namely the opportunity to participate, on a long-term basis, in creating joint actions and the products or initiatives resulting therefrom that brought about a mutual understanding of their activities and orientation, increased willingness of the individual types of institutions to co-operate on activities of other projects, or even respect of these organisations to the activities of organisations of a specific type (e.g. public administration, civic associations or public service companies, educational institutions of various character, research institutions, trade unions, business entities, etc.). This fact is also confirmed by the results of structured interviews, which imply that confidence among the partners acquired on a long-term basis, as well as the generated social capital are crucial for the development of innovation products and their enforcement on the labour market.

Moreover, presentations of projects and partners at various levels suggest a quite positive and important finding with regard to the innovation principle: individual DP welcome or actually search for co-operation or contact opportunities with other DP, even outside the priority of their DP. As an example, we can mention main organisations of DP or partner

institutions involved in DP in the area of Priority 4, which correlates, to a large extent, with the principle of gender mainstreaming as one of the relevant concepts of CIP EQUAL as a whole, and at the same time with the key principle of mainstreaming.

Composition of Czech DP in Relation to Innovation

The evaluated questionnaire survey and structured interviews¹²⁶ imply that most institutions participating in individual partnerships believe that their present DP composition is satisfactory, functioning, and effective with respect to the development of innovation products in the area of discrimination on the labour market. The analyses also suggest that adding another partner would not affect the level of development of innovation products in any significant way; nevertheless, 13% of the partners would welcome the enlargement of their DP by including a new partner. When taking a more in-depth look at this fact, it was ascertained that DP in the CR would most frequently welcome the involvement of public administration institutions. Further assessments suggest that this opinion is mainly supported by NGOs. In other words, we may say that NGOs in particular point to the necessity of more intense involvement of public administration bodies. A minimum of partners (4%) expressed themselves in the sense that the exclusion of a partner would contribute to increased effectiveness when developing and enforcing innovations. From the point of view of the evaluator, the exclusion of a partner, especially in DP with larger numbers of partners, would contribute to the higher effectiveness of decision-making and communication. The current partial partners could fulfil their tasks also outside formal membership in DP.

Half of the questionnaire survey respondents believe that their current partnership has a positive impact on and supports the conception of new products. Another 25% of the respondents clearly indicate that partnership has significantly aided in the development of innovation products. These results generally confirm the fundamental and principal reason of partnership because it is possible to claim that some products would never be conceived without a partnership.¹²⁷ Another aspect is the effectiveness of expended funds and the impact of such new products on the labour market. This, however, exceeds the framework of the partnership principle evaluation.

Partner Contribution to the Development of Innovation Products

The results of the survey conducted among Czech DP bespeak of a very positive effect of partnership. Most partners have contributed in some way to the fulfilment of the basic project idea, to the development and enforcement of innovation products. This fact was also documented by a web questionnaire question focusing on the contribution of organisations in terms of developing new methodologies in the particular thematic area, creating new research and education forms and tools in new areas applicable in the Czech Republic. The results imply that only a small number of the involved institutions deem to contribute the most to innovation from their DP. On the contrary, the majority of individual DP

¹²⁶ Structured interviews were conducted with selected DP representatives who were grant beneficiaries (project coordinators).

¹²⁷ Institutions that would have competed with one another before are now co-operating thanks to the established partnerships. Because the DP members partially share their know how, they give way to products that could not be developed by partial institutions.

representatives indicate that their organisation brought new methods and procedures and thereby contributed to the development of new products. It is therefore obvious that, when fulfilling the main partnership tasks, a vast majority of the partners attempted to participate with a level of commitment corresponding to their possibilities. In this respect, mutual communication has proved as a key factor.

From the evaluator's point of view, partnership supports co-operation among institutions when developing new products, however, the situation in the area of participation is not as distinct. This has been also confirmed by other ascertained facts and subsequent statistical analyses. In addition, it is namely supported by the fact that almost a quarter of the partnerships indicated that they had the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process (e.g. with respect to project development and solution methodology, i.e. new products), yet they did not use the opportunity. Overall, the position of partial partners who usually fulfil a particular task in a specific project phase differs from the position of key partners, and their participation in the development of new products is less intense.

Major contribution to the development of new tools according to individual organisation types:

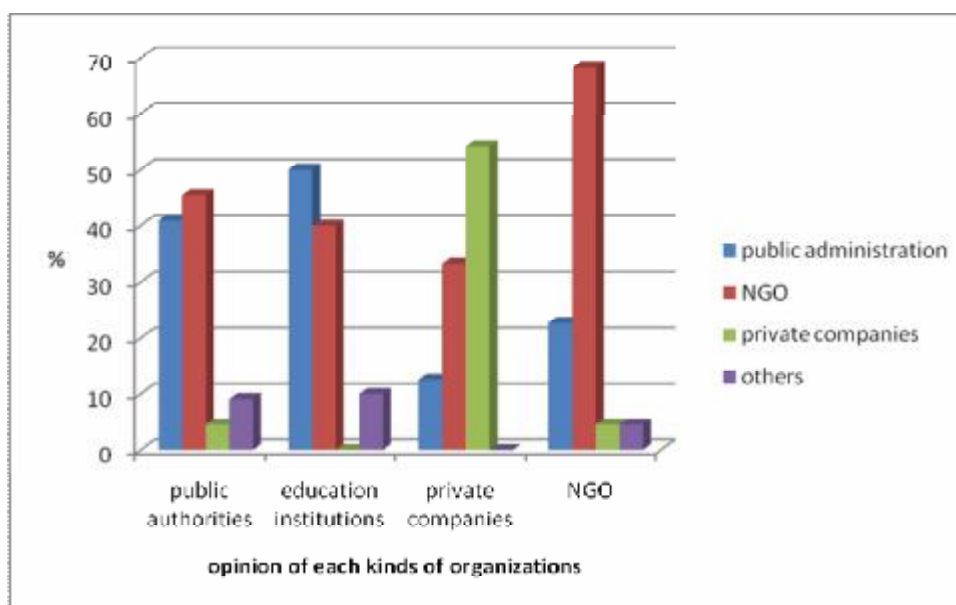
Public administration institutions – Identification of needs only at the macro level, alignment of outputs with social needs, fulfilment of long-term strategies

Non-government non-profit organisations – Expansion of Czech DP by adding a civic element, suggestions “from below”, boosting of public involvement in public affairs administration, notifying of specific problems at the micro level

Private firms – Transfer and extension of know how, aid in resolving issues from the perspective of an employer

Based on the experience gained from functioning DP, the partners expressed their opinions as regards the major contribution and effectiveness of the individual partner types when developing innovation products and tools. Although the prevailing opinion is that NGOs were the major contributors (shared by almost a half of the respondents, i.e. 47%), the individual answers were subject to further analyses. The aim was to determine the differences between answers according to individual organisation types. An interesting contrast of opinions regarding the contribution of individual institutions from the point of view of innovation product development is worth mentioning. In short, each organisation type is convinced to be the major contributor (and/or of the major contribution of the same type of institution). Private companies, for example, consider their contribution as most effective and beneficial within a DP, while the remaining and most frequent types of DP partners are not convinced of the same. A similar situation may be observed among NGOs or public institutions, even if public bodies indicated namely NGOs as the most effective contributors to the development of new tools to fight discrimination on the labour market apart from themselves.

Diagram 8: Major contributors among individual institutions from the point of view of innovation product development



Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

From the evaluator's point of view, these results show a rather interesting difference in opinions inside DP, which, however, may point to certain inconsistency of the contribution of individual organisations in DP. The results also suggest a more detailed analysis of Czech DP within the framework of thematic evaluations oriented on the partnership principle.

As regards the research in new areas applicable in the environment of the CR, 24% of the approached institutions indicated that they were attempting to contribute to the achievement of objective, yet they did not have sufficient information to accomplish the same. This may be due to insufficient contact with foreign DP which focus on similar issues and which could provide their experience.

5.7 Partnership Organisation and Decision-Making Mechanism Configuration

Another of the theses subject to verification is, among others, the influence of centralised and decentralised forms of management on the sustainability of individual DP, and particularly on their developed products. As all CIP EQUAL projects are in their final phase at the time when this report is finalised, they represent a most up-to-date topic.

In the long-term, the implementation of the partnership principle in the CR generally corresponds to its time, the appropriate DP experience, and the overall social environment. At this moment, it is not possible to determine whether the centralised management model is more suitable in the Czech environment than the decentralised model. With regard to the historical development in the CR, the current dominance of the centralised model seems natural and a minor shift from the centralised to the decentralised model may be anticipated in the successive years. Nevertheless, this issue is associated with a demanding administrative system in the Czech Republic, which significantly influences central project management.

A key question is, however, how the management model manifests itself in the decision-making mechanisms of individual DP. The questionnaire survey and structured interview results point to the rather high satisfaction of the involved institutions with the current settings of the decision-making mechanisms at all levels. DP with a larger number of partners usually have an executive body (a steering or managing committee), which mainly makes strategic and coordination decisions (evaluations of DP working programme execution), and a number of workgroups, which represent the operational level within project execution. Everyone has equal voting rights in a steering committee and may freely express their opinion. The decision-making mechanisms function based on an agreement reached by all the partners. Decentralisation elements manifest themselves in workgroups, in which individual partners have their representatives and which function more as work teams. Thus, decision-making often involves a hierarchy-based decision-making process at several levels, which is supported by strong internal co-operation of the involved entities. Satisfaction with the configuration of the decision-making mechanisms is therefore higher. Intensive communication and confidence within DP, which is detailed in the following chapter, are a necessary precondition.

Table 44: Decision-making mechanisms of individual partner types

Partner type	Satisfaction with decision-making mechanism configuration*	Option of participating in decision-making process**
Main partner	3.50	3.94
Main partner and partial activity implementer	3.66	4.00
Partner and partial programme/activity coordinator	3.00	3.47
Partner and partial activity implementer	3.12	3.49

* Average value of a 1–4 scale where 1 = current decision-making mechanism configuration is inadequate, 4 = we are fully satisfied

** Average value of a 1–4 scale where 1 = no opportunity to participate, 4 = we actively participate in the decision-making process

Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

Even though the structured interview results point to satisfaction with the configuration of the decision-making mechanisms, minor differences may be identified from a detailed analysis of the questionnaire survey. The table clearly shows the differences between the responses of head DP on one side and partial partners on the other side. A slightly different viewpoint on the subject issue depending on the position of a partner in a project is therefore apparent. As regards the rate of satisfaction with the configuration of the decision-making mechanism, it should be underlined that 10% of the entities involved in DP are currently not satisfied at all with the decision-making methods within their DP. These namely are institutions fulfilling the roles of partial partners and selected activity implementers. Moreover, this also affects the already mentioned decline in the table above.

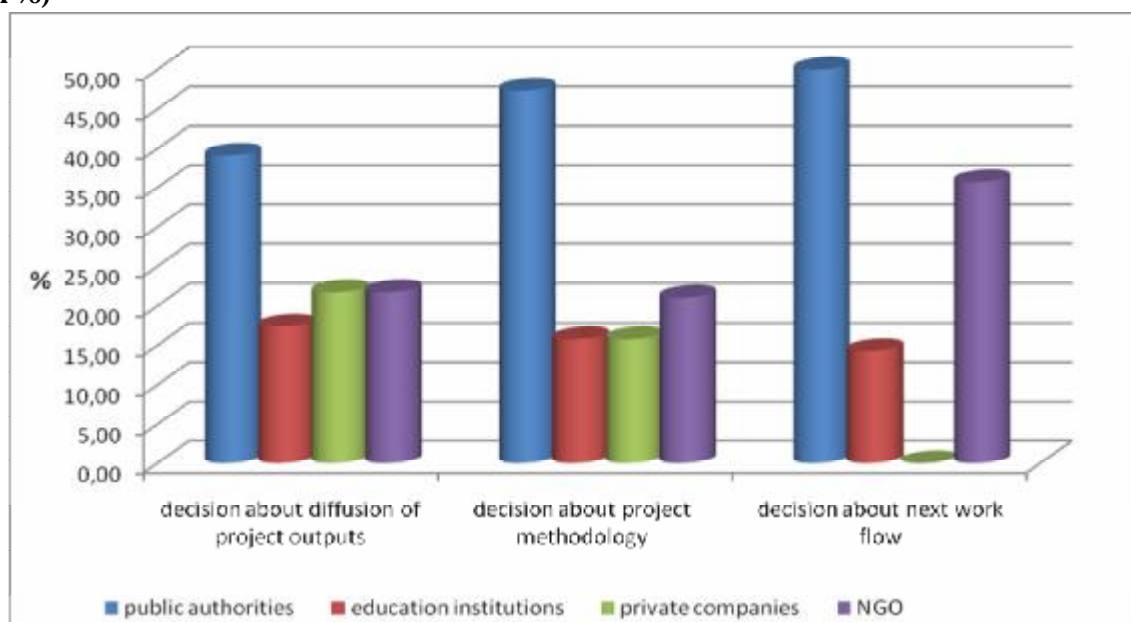
The second indicator in the table relates to the option of participating in the decision-making process and it was monitored in detail with respect to decisions on the further progress of

work, on disseminating project outputs, on solution methodology, and on changes proposed in the course of project execution. In average, 25% of institutions indicate that they have an opportunity to participate in decision-making in all areas, yet they are passive and do not partake in the process. It should be mentioned that they once again mostly involve partners responsible for fulfilling partial project tasks. It should be also pointed out that most of these inactive partners are fully satisfied with the configuration of the decision-making mechanism. The evaluator is convinced that such passive involvement of some of the DP partners casts certain doubts on the fulfilment of the partnership principle and that such cases constitute (partial) co-operation among institutions. It is highly probable that such entities could be involved in project execution in another way than by being integrated in DP (e.g. on a sub-contractor basis).

As the finding concerning the passiveness of some of the partners is rather fundamental, the subject quarter of the partners was further examined according to individual organisation types. The diagram below clarifies the specified situation of passive partners and their structure. The partial analysis in all the surveyed areas suggests that public organisations are the least active. This is not surprising in the case of decisions concerning project methodology as such activities are mostly secured by other organisations (enterprises, educational organisations, NGOs, etc.). Public organisations, however, are generally considered as entities that can significantly aid in applying and introducing outputs in practice. In this respect, it is interesting that public organisations most frequently indicated that they did not participate in decision-making concerning project output dissemination. In total, they represent a third of all the public institutions involved in CIP EQUAL DP. A different interpretation may be that the public sector representatives tend to underestimate themselves and undervalue the opportunity through which they may actually contribute to changing the established processes. Furthermore, the diagram below shows that public organisations amount to 40% of all the inactive partners (in case of decision-making concerning project output dissemination). The analysis also implies that NGOs distinctly realise the role of the public sector with respect to the meaningfulness of their activities. The public sector, in particular, is familiar with the details on the overall strategies of the state, the EU, etc., and it has comprehensive knowledge of the subject issue at the micro level. This is quite logical as regards the innovation of outputs and their implementation in practice, which is always subject to acceptance on the part of the public sector. All these results are essential for the overall contribution of this partial partnership evaluation. The evaluator believes that the above-described situation may be caused by several reasons. The above-mentioned results relating to public administration may be due to the low prestige of officials in society and/or they may arise from their frustration and helplessness to change anything in public administration. The remuneration system in the public sector, which the employees may not consider as motivating and which can thus reflect itself in their activeness when executing a project, may also have a certain impact.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ See also comments concerning the regression analysis and the role of administration of employment services in Chapter 5.5.2.

Diagram 9: Structure of inactive partners not participating in the decision-making process (in %)



Note: The diagram depicts only inactive partners and not the whole set of respondents.

Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

Overall, the fact that the decision-making mechanism is applied in many DP not only formally according to CIP EQUAL requirements but also spontaneously and through actions may be assessed positively. This is the result of the wide scope of many projects where several, seemingly unrelated activities and tasks are executed at the same time. A markedly positive evaluation of the decision-making mechanism configuration (approximately 75%) and of the option of participating in the decision-making process within DP suggests the due functioning of most DP, which is a precondition of successful project outputs.

With respect to thematically oriented partnership principle evaluations, the evaluation team recommends to conduct analyses of the functioning of decision-making mechanisms not only within DP but also inside the individual involved organisations. How do the organisations involved in a DP function on the inside? How many people from the relevant organisations actively participate in the execution of the CIP EQUAL project?

5.8 Partnership Principle and Communication Mechanism Configuration

Communication among DP partners is usually effected at several levels that stem from the configuration of the decision-making mechanisms. This commonly involves the managing or coordination (steering or managing committee) level and the operational level (workgroups). *Most work is traditionally done in workgroups, the thematic focus of which is different, and thus, mutual information sharing is essential (e.g. distribution of minutes).* In addition, heads of workgroups may submit proposals and recommendation to the steering committee (managing committee) of the project. Based on the evaluation of the questionnaire survey and structured interviews, we may say that such (or similar) configuration is suitable and well proven. Most DP do not mention any fundamental problems with respect to the configuration of the communication mechanisms or insufficient access to project-related

information. From the point of view of the evaluator, this seems a suitable and well-proven configuration of the decision-making mechanisms, as well as the related communication mechanisms.

In terms of communication methods, simple, flexible and financially undemanding forms of contacts prevail in most DP, which facilitate immediate resolution of partner needs. They primarily include e-mail and telephone communication. Increasing knowledge of applying advanced information and communication technology results in the rather frequent use of such applications as Skype or ICQ, which were not as widespread a few years ago and which currently offer a number of benefits compared to traditional communication methods.

Most DP have also grown accustomed to holding regular meetings (work meetings). They usually take place at 1 to 2-month intervals. Moreover, 84% have created their own web portals where information on the project is available to the public and target groups. Intranet and/or discussion forums with restricted access, where partners have access to information (e.g. basic documents to be discussed) and may discuss issues within their DP, are also used. The evaluation team conducted a research of the websites of selected partnerships. It should be emphasised that in some cases, the websites are not functional or contain outdated information. Furthermore, a web portal does not necessarily mean a higher level of communication or promotion.

All the above-indicated forms create sufficient space for communication, not only among partners but also among target groups, which reflects itself in the progress of the project, as well as in raising awareness about the project. Despite all positive findings, somewhat different viewpoints on the intensity of communication among main and partial partners ought to be mentioned. The opinion of the main support beneficiaries and main partners seems more optimistic than the opinion of institutions fulfilling the role of partial activity partners. Nonetheless, these partners too are basically satisfied with access to information and communication intensity. In general, the communication standard in larger DP cannot be considered as problematic. On the contrary, communication in smaller DP proved as somewhat difficult. However, this is not a general fact; it is given by the specific situation in some DP.

The evaluation team rates the standard of the communication mechanisms and their intensity as very good. In a majority of the DP, communication concerning project matters is faultless. We should not value only internal communication among partners but communication with the outer environment as well. This mainly involves own website administration and effective communication within individual NTN, the functioning of which may be evaluated quite positively.

Some DP have also drawn up their own self-evaluation reports, in which the individual partners also expressed their opinions in connection with the DP communication mechanisms. Moreover, the available information confirms the high level of satisfaction with the partnership principle as regards communication mechanisms.

Table 45: Evaluation of communication and access to information in DP

Partner type	Communication intensity in DP*	Access to information**
Main partner	4.50	3.82
Main partner and partial activity implementer	4.50	3.78
Partner and partial programme/activity coordinator	4.20	3.48
Partner and partial activity implementer	4.12	3.5

* Average value of a 1-5 scale where 1 = minimum, 5 = fully satisfactory

** Average value of a 1-4 scale where 1 = some information does not reach us at all, 4 = we are familiarised with all information

Source: IREAS questionnaire survey

5.9 Partnership Principle Summary and Recommendations

The partnership principle is a key principle of CIP EQUAL that needs to be fulfilled effectively. Nevertheless, there is no unified methodology for its assessment and the term itself is interpreted in a varying manner. The focus of this evaluation was not only on the traditional appraisal of process-related partnership functioning arrangements, but in many aspects, the evaluators also analysed the current and potential impacts of partnership and its types. The analysis of available sources together with a specific analysis of selected projects leads to the following conclusions and suggestions for further evaluations.

The principal reason and the immense benefit of partnership lie in building and strengthening confidence among organisations. This is an irreplaceable advantage requiring sufficient time. To create a development team in the area of inclusion of disadvantaged groups on the labour market, which is the case of most CIP EQUAL projects, is a complex process and it takes some time. For this reason, experience from the 1st round of CIP EQUAL, as well as other actions and programmes, gave rise to numerous partnerships and many institutions had the opportunity to gain their first experience in executing the common objective of multiple institutions, seeming highly beneficial. In the opinion of the evaluator, the 2nd round of CIP EQUAL shall have a similar effect in the programming period 2007 – 2013, to which the good mutual experience of selected partners (and/or whole DP) may be transferred, and the partnerships adjusted in this manner may continue (in other programmes) in the commenced development of new products. Sharing knowledge and information aids in the development of new products. If a project product is to have higher impact, more institutions need to be involved in DP and this is what the partnership principle facilitates. Social capital is generated thereby and it may be denoted as confidence capital.

Experience indicates that a large number of partners involved in a project may lead to problems in mutual coordination of activities and promotion of innovation. In DP with more members, a marked coherence with the passive approach of some partial partners was demonstrated (most frequently involving public institutions). Involvement of all types of organisations whose involvement is crucial in terms of solving a particular problem at a regional or sectoral level is indeed important for the future establishment of DP. It will lead to reduced decision-making costs and may result in increased DP functionality and

effectiveness. Remaining institutions that should participate on resolving a partial project issue may be secured through a sub-contractor or other relationship. Such an approach could aid in establishing truly effectively functioning partnerships.

Another aspect affecting project execution may also be the applied model of partnership. Most DP in the Czech Republic deploy a centralised model with hierarchic arrangement, which obviously does not present such an administrative burden as the decentralised model. Nevertheless, we can formulate a hypothesis that the decentralised model could be more beneficial for CIP EQUAL. It should be pointed out, for example, that partnerships with decentralised management are indeed sustainable also after the termination of the project. At present, there are some DP that are exclusively based on the project platform, but it is most probable that such partnerships will not continue (at least not in such extent) after funding ends and when another suitable source of funding is not found. This may negatively affect the sustainability of developed products and their introduction in practice.

Demanding administration and financial inflexibility are still considered by the DP as the major and the most frequently encountered problems within the fulfilment of the partnership principle. Nonetheless, structured interviews show that many DP have learnt to cope with these administrative requirements (monitoring reports, etc.). Other, even if less significant, obstacles include lack of previous experience, incomparable expertise of individual partners or their motivation to co-operate.

With a view to the fact that the ESF programme preparation for the period 2007 – 2013 is closed, recommendations have been formulated in relation to partnership and its enhancement at the project level. The evaluation team believes that many existing DP, which have been originally established to implement a specific ESF funded project, will continue in their work in the period 2007 – 2013. The evaluator is convinced that the total number of partners in newly established project teams will be reduced as a result of the objectives of additional projects and the currently gained experience. It is a matter of fact that co-operation with some partners was not successful and some changes in the DP composition will therefore be made.

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the project intents that are to be executed through DP in the programming period 2007 – 2013, the following recommendations, which arise from statistical analyses, structured interviews and the questionnaire survey, should be taken into account:

- Before establishing a partnership, the number of involved partners should be thoroughly contemplated, and only the partners that are required for the development of a new product and successful project execution should be included. A partnership should only involve partners who may be denoted as irreplaceable in relation to the particular project. This will eliminate potential partners who would otherwise fulfil the role of sub-contractors. Moreover, a wide partnership may result in an ineffective scope of the resolved issue.
- The answers of the respondents and statistical analyses suggest a link between empowerment, the decision-making process structures, and the independence of the involved partners (i.e. mutual relationships between the partners and their ability to present their opinion). Both these variables increase the success rate of empowerment. It is therefore obvious that clearly arranged decision-making

processes and higher partner independence may boost the success of empowerment in DP.

- When planning and contemplating future project intents, it is essential to plan the project outputs and termination in detail, however distant they may seem, as of now. This is crucial in terms of the effective impact of the project intent, as well as in terms of the sustainability of the specific outcomes and products in practice. When drawing up the project intent and planning individual objectives and outputs, co-operation and involvement of all members of the future partnership are vital. This implies from structured interviews conducted with DP that are currently in the final project phase.
- Different behaviour and individual partner activity is usually typical for DP. Less active partners should thus be more involved in partial tasks in the course of execution, which will lead to their higher involvement in the DP functioning. This is one of the fundamental principles of actual partnership functioning and not of a sub-contractor relationship between entities. DP should concurrently apply similar mechanisms for evaluating work across partner organisations. This should eliminate divergent employee remuneration and enhance motivation particularly among public administration employees.
- Before launching a project, all planned activities should be thoroughly discussed with the partners to determine whether they are truly able and willing to execute them. The potential withdrawal of partners from DP, one of the weaknesses of partnership fulfilment, may thereby be avoided. Experience shows that the failure to identify with some project ideas and activities results in the withdrawal of a partner from a DP.
- A key activity (as mentioned in the previous ongoing evaluation) seems to be the organisation of regular meetings where partners (also those outside CIP EQUAL, i.e. employers) share their ideas and have the opportunity to present their objections or comments, as well as expand, compare and verify the individual activity results.

In the CR, DP are currently defined rather generally. In this respect, the recommendation for MA, in the OP of which partnerships will be established, is to specify partner activities. This particularly involves determining what types of activities partners should assert themselves in for consideration as partners. Therefore, a certain classification of partnership activities may be contemplated. A legislative definition of partnership, which is now being prepared, should also aid the process.

6 Empowerment Principle Evaluation

6.1 Evaluation Questions and the Main Answers

Are there any new developments in the method of implementing the empowerment principle, i.e. new forms of target group involvement in decision-making compared to the previous evaluation phase?

Even if it is estimated that, compared to Action 1, almost a half of the DP uses some new form of target group involvement, in most cases, involvement and/or other kinds of participation in the results, activities and products are deployed instead of empowerment. Nonetheless, target group involvement in empowerment was achieved in our opinion, whereas their independence was valued the most.

Unlike the second phase of ongoing evaluation, during which target group involvement in the decision-making process was viewed more as a formality, the present evaluation phase allows us to identify the most successful forms of involvement through which individual DP partners and target groups participated in decision-making. The evaluating activity outcome implies a growing interest of the DP in the actual involvement of target groups and their ability to activate target group members, to recognise the target group needs, and to respond to them directly. Apparently, the interest of target groups is dependent on their motivation, direct communication with them and on an individual approach.

What is the level of contribution of the empowerment principle to the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities?

The development of innovation tools within the framework of project management is aided by both regular comments from the DP partners and target group involvement. This is beneficial for a DP where empowerment is viewed as a product, namely in the form of methodical materials and educational programmes (e.g. Silesian Diacony and Sdružení pro probaci a mediaci v justici – Association for Probation and Mediation in Justice).

What is the level to which the empowerment principle reinforces/adds to the efficiency of other principles (partnership, innovation, mainstreaming)?

Empowerment contributes positively to the application of the partnership principle – in terms of the partnership scope as well as depth. It simultaneously affects the development of innovation tools and prospects with regard to successful mainstreaming. Consultations represented the prevailing level of target group involvement. Delegation of responsibility as the supreme form of involvement of target groups in project execution was utilised by minimum DP. Almost all the approached DP members considered the influence of target groups on the success of mainstreaming as beneficial or very beneficial. Moreover, their responses indicate that empowerment had a positive effect on the development of innovation tools.

What are generally the best forms of involving persons and groups in strategy creation and preparation and in the phases of strategy implementation?

When creating and preparing empowerment strategies, especially with a view to the fact that the phase involved the own foundation of DP, the DP Managing Authority and/or conferences were utilised most frequently. Workgroups and steering committees have proved as the most beneficial within strategy implementation. A rule applies in case of up to 20 partners that the more partners a DP has, the more important workgroups are. While the steering committee is most significant in the case of DP with a higher number of partners or, on the contrary, with 6 to 10 partners.

What different methods of partner/person/target group involvement across thematic fields can be identified?

The most significant method of partner involvement is their participation in workgroups, which are materially connected to target group involvement, (e.g. methodical workgroups). The most significant method of target group involvement is the form of objection mechanisms, particularly within the framework of evaluating seminars, mentors, and/or project activities.

How did these different methods affect the formulation of objectives and their fulfilment?

Within the framework of formulating objectives at the partner level, the DP Managing Authority was considered as the most significant form of involvement. As regards target groups, direct involvement of target groups did not take place in the majority of cases. As to the fulfilment of objectives, most of the respondents rated the influence of workgroups as the most significant in the questionnaire survey, while the steering committee was considered as the most significant within structured interviews.

To what level were all the actors able to participate in acquiring experience, learning and decision-making?

Within the decision-making process, the level of empowerment is the most significant. At the partner level, empowerment is namely affected by the DP size. It was ascertained that the bigger the DP, the greater the influence of workgroups. The most significant method of involvement with respect to gaining experience is participation in educational activities. This conception of empowerment, however, is not common among Czech DP. It may be expected in cases where empowerment is part of a product.

What are the reasons for the inactivity of some of the partners within the framework of DP?

The reasons for the inactivity of individual partners may be found in the different approach to project implementation and/or in underestimating the administration aspects of the project. A partial answer to the question is also the cessation of activities on the part of a partner, default in payment on the part of MA, inability to provide financial remuneration for project-related activities in public administration bodies, and specialisation of a partner on specific activities, i.e. the partner withdraws

after fulfilling its task. No relevant reasons have been determined as regards the potential inactivity of target groups in relation to the partnership principle. All the DP rated target groups as active.

6.2 Introduction and Definition of Terms

The implementation of the empowerment principle is very difficult to grasp and it is an area appearing in all Member States within the framework of the implementation of CIP EQUAL.

Entities responsible for the preparation of implementation of each CIP EQUAL understand the empowerment principle in different ways. This may be attributable to its loose definition at the level of the whole Community Initiative, as well as to its proximity to the partnership principle as regards the involvement of relevant entities in the design of projects and their subsequent implementation.

A general definition denotes empowerment as “the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Alsop 2006). A broader definition denotes empowerment as “a method of combining employee knowledge and competences into a whole with the aim to support performance” (Wall 2002). According to the Commission Communication C (2000) 853, the empowerment principle shall be central to each DP and in order to fulfil the same “those involved in the implementation of activities should also take part in the decision-making. On the other hand, the active participation of those targeted for assistance should be positively assessed in the selection for Action 1 funding and the confirmation of selection for Action 2.”

It is thus apparent, that taking into account the focus of the target groups, these two definitions are nearly identical.

The viewpoints from which the empowerment principle may be assessed within the framework of project preparation and implementation are several.

The MA and NSS requirements mostly view the empowerment principle as the necessity to facilitate empowerment to all partner organisations involved, as well as target groups (usually clients) and their activities¹²⁹, without explicitly requiring involvement of contracting authorities (particularly public administration bodies), which co-fund the relevant activities and decide on their integration in their strategies (mainstreaming), are also involved in empowerment throughout the process of innovation development and application. If it were so, DP would work with a complete model of a classic participation-based solution of social issues. This model is based on the co-operation of three (and not two) groups of entities:

- Providers of social, education, consulting and employee services through which they fulfil the CIP EQUAL objectives in the CR,
- Final beneficiaries, i.e. clients to whom such services are provided (project activity target groups),
- Public administration, which is a) the contracting authority in relation to a part of such services (where public funds are expended), and b) the maker of policies for municipalities, cities and towns, regions and states, as well as of corresponding

¹²⁹ See, for example, the Equal Initiative Principles at www.equalcr.cz.

legislation and generally binding or specific regulations of municipalities, towns and cities, regions and the CR.

DP defined the concept of empowerment alone rather ambiguously and vaguely. Official MA and NSS materials use such phrases as “the opportunity to make joint decisions”, “the option to participate in solving relevant issues”, “involvement of the representative of groups imminently threatened by inequalities and discrimination”, “the opportunity to actively participate in the development and execution of activities of individual DP”, etc. Nevertheless, it is apparent and confirmed by DP experience that active participation, active involvement and the opportunity to make joint decisions do not necessarily have to be and are not the same.

6.2.1 Process or Product

From a material point of view, empowerment may be conceived as a process, which serves as a means for achieving objectives, or as a product to be developed. Within the concept viewing empowerment as a process and according to foreign recommendations (GB EQUAL Support Unit 2004), it is advisable that partners and target groups have the opportunity to participate in all phases of the project cycle, e.g. ranging from participating through web forums to membership in MA DP. Methodical guidelines for target group involvement (MoLSA 2007), which are based on foreign resources, do not explicitly indicate the option of conceiving empowerment as either a process or a product. The specified procedure rather recommends conceiving the principle as a product. This suggests an attempt of the support provider to ensure a sufficient theoretical basis for the beneficiaries to implement the principle, while, at the same time, it somewhat optimistically anticipates target group involvement to be one of the project objectives. Contrary to reality, it thus neglects the fact that empowerment at the target group level may be and often serves only as a means to achieve project objectives.

6.2.2 Actor Involvement

In principle, empowerment may be divided into two levels in terms of involvement of individual actors. At the partner level, it represents the division of competences and responsibilities associated with the performed activities among individual partners in a just manner. At the level of target group involvement, two approaches are recognised.

The first approach views empowerment as involvement of target groups in the DP decision-making process and/or the role of target group representatives is considered as a role of a supervisory body, as a guarantee that the activities are executed in compliance with their needs. The second main approach understands empowerment as a method of managing the future of individuals or groups to achieve the desired objectives through autonomous access to information and the development of abilities and skills.

6.2.3 Methodical MA Support within Empowerment

The Managing Authority issued Methodical Sheet 3 (July 2005) for the empowerment principle, which is published on the website www.equalcr.cz. The document focuses on involvement of target groups in partnership and it defines the primary principles. Moreover, it advises DP to have individuals complete a short questionnaire at the beginning or to answer a few control questions. Thus, even the initial documents on partnership were to contain two facts:

- Information on the planned involvement of target groups in partnership,
- Description of the mechanisms ensuring that target groups are involved in project development and in result evaluations.

Institutions and public administration bodies were not mentioned with regard to the implementation of the empowerment principle despite the fact that they naturally become DP partners, as well as beneficiaries of some of the executed project outputs. The reason for this omission probably stems from the fact that a) binding EU documents did not require the same in its definitions of the EQUAL principles, b) an impression may have arisen that the participation of public administration bodies and institutions was sufficiently dealt with within the mainstreaming principle.

This leads us to the question to what level the currently recognised principles do indeed fully and uniformly cover (without overlapping) the essence of the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL. The partnership principle, implemented in a consistent manner, no doubt comprehends empowerment among partners who are members of a DP. Surprisingly, true empowerment is not mentioned among “the 5 principles for successful DP functioning” (see Concise Guide to CIP EQUAL Principles for Development Partnerships, July 2007, published by MA and NSS).

6.2.4 Types of Partners in Relation to Target Group Involvement

According to the empowerment principle, all partner organisations involved in DP should be allowed to participate in joint decision-making. In addition to the representatives of individual organisations participating in the work of a particular DP, also persons who have direct experience with discrimination or inequalities on the labour market may participate in the resolution of the subject issue.

When examining DP involved in CIP EQUAL, we may determine three types of organisations participating in DP. Organisations of the first type directly bring together persons or groups of persons exposed to or threatened by discrimination or inequalities on the labour market (e.g. Národní rada zdravotně postižených ČR – Czech National Disability Council, Sjednocená organizace nevidomých a slabozrakých – United Organisation of the Blind and Visually Impaired).

For example: The United Organisation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, which is the main partner of the Tyfloemployability DP, declares in its motto: “*We are not an organisation deciding and acting for the visually impaired, we are visually impaired citizens who decide and act for ourselves.*”

Furthermore, there are entities that work with these disadvantaged groups and focus their activities on helping them, not only in connection with the situation on the labour market (e.g. Sdružení pro péči o duševně nemocné, Fokus Praha – Association for Mental Health Care, Organizace pro pomoc uprchlíkům – Organisation for Aid to Refugees).

People affected by discrimination or inequalities on the labour market often best see the causes of the same. Activities of the initial two above-specified types of entities are directly linked with the needs of target groups affected by discrimination on the labour market.

The third group includes organisations whose main or prevailing activity was based on other activities, which, however, currently or temporarily focus on some of the disadvantaged groups (e.g. Jihočeská hospodářská komora – South Bohemian Chamber of Commerce, Město Krásná Lípa – the Town of Krásná Lípa, Střední škola technická – Secondary Technical School, etc.).

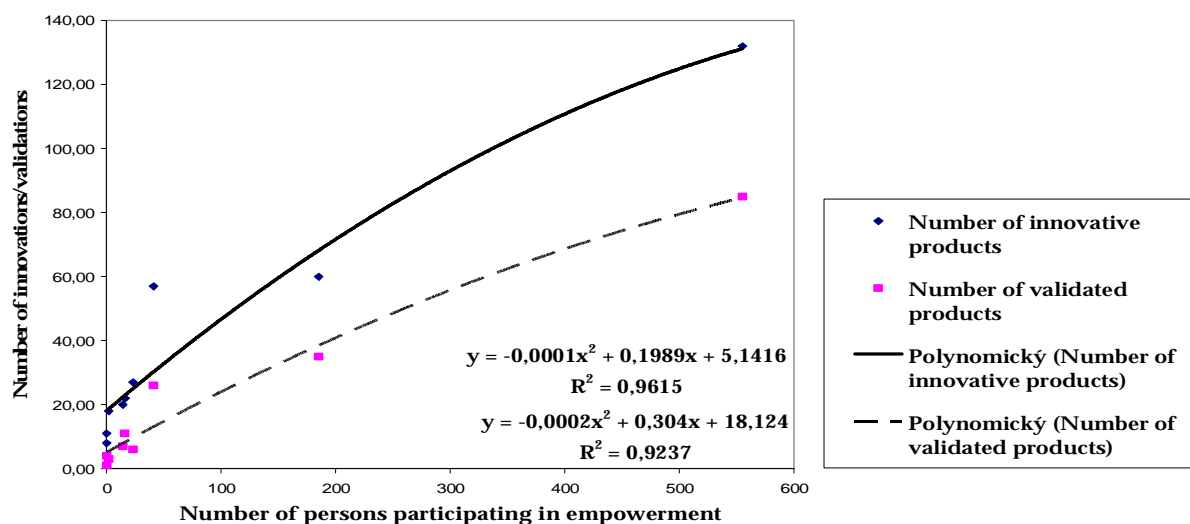
Each DP always involved several partners from all three groups defined above. Thereby, the participation of target groups in individual actions and in empowerment within their DP was ensured throughout the project.

6.3 Empowerment and Development of New Tools

In order to provide answers to evaluation questions, it is necessary to determine at first who demonstrably participated in empowerment. To unify our viewpoint with practice at DP, we conceived empowerment as involvement of all partners and/or target group representatives (service users, clients) in decision-making within the framework of project preparation and execution.

The individual findings and conclusions are grounded on the study of DP documents (monitoring reports, meeting minutes, descriptions of developed products, etc.), the results of questionnaire survey 1 (through www.IREAS.cz until February 2008) and questionnaire survey 2 (33 DP contacted in March 2008), personal interviews at DP, and expert discussions.

Diagram 10: The influence of target group involvement on innovation products and validations (according to thematic fields)

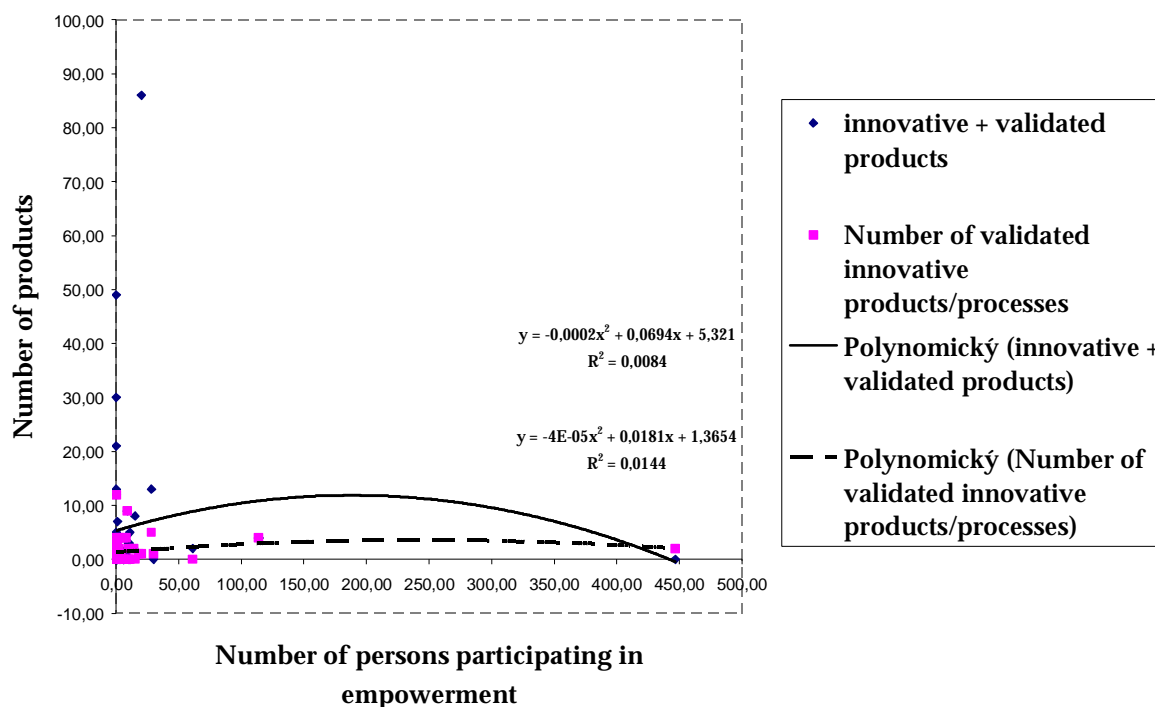


Source: MSSF Monit, own calculations

The diagram above clearly shows that the growing number of persons involved in empowerment also increases the quantity of developed and validated innovation products. The evaluation team sees a positive effect of empowerment in allowing target groups to express their needs more easily and these needs subsequently reflect themselves in DP product preparation and adjustment with the aid of empowerment.

Nevertheless, a certain risk presented by this approach is based on the fragmentation of the product forms when “a product exists for every need”. The diagram below displays this approach at the level of individual DP. In this case, positive correlation is not as obvious and from a certain point represented by the number of involved target groups, and the quantity of developed products stops growing. This may confirm the conclusion that involvement of target groups has a positive effect only to a certain level. When this level is exceeded, the needs of target groups tend to repeat themselves and products cease to be innovative.

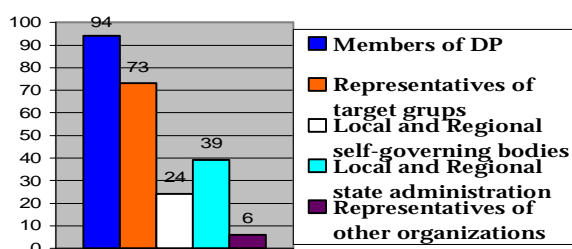
Diagram 11: The influence of empowerment on the quantity of products developed at the DP level



Source: MSSF Monit, own calculations

Almost in all DP, the representatives of organisations that were members of the DP were involved in empowerment, and the representatives of target groups in three fourths of cases.

Diagram 12: Involvement in empowerment



Source: Questionnaire survey

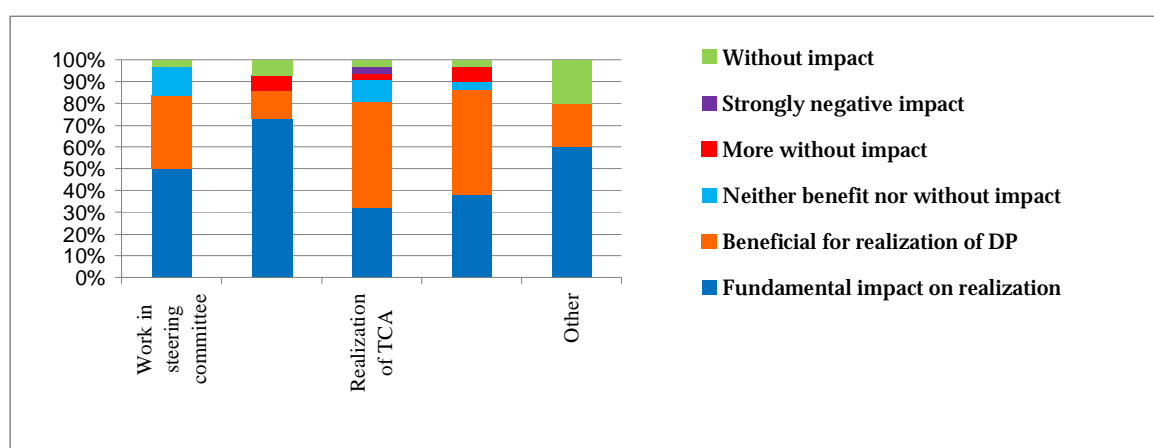
In a few DP, local and regional state administration was also involved, i.e. labour bureaus or regional authorities (39%) and municipal and regional administration, i.e. elected deputies of municipalities and regions (24%), and exceptionally representatives of other entities.

What were the most successful forms of involvement through which individual DP partners participated in decision-making? The most significant contribution resulted from the

involvement of partners in workgroups (in 73 – 86% of cases according to respondents). Work in the DP steering committee had a significant impact on project execution roughly in half of the cases and in another third of the cases, it represented a contribution. Less marked, even if the most positively valued, was the contribution of workshops and seminars, as well as international partnerships within TCA.

Negative influence of partner involvement appeared in these forms only exceptionally. Nonetheless, it is possible that we have not detected attempts, which were unsuccessful at the very beginning and which therefore cannot be evaluated at present. Practical experience shows that DP are “self-learning” bodies where, for a certain period of time, co-operation among partners “settles”, develops, intensifies, enriches, until it finally provides results in most cases, which may be appraised as useful.

Diagram 13: The influence of involvement within empowerment



Source: Questionnaire survey

What factors in relation to the conception of new forms of target group involvement may be considered as essential? Structured interviews and questionnaire surveys targeted at DP showed namely the following:

- The interest of the DP itself in the actual involvement of target groups and their ability to activate target group members, to recognise the target group needs, and to respond to them directly;
- The interest of the target group and, in order to facilitate this, also its motivation, direct communication, establishing a relationship based on confidence, aligning the language of the project team with the target group representatives;
- Transferring innovation to practice, pilot testing.

In exceptional cases, emphasis was laid on the importance of co-operation of administration and labour bureaus, on MoEYS support, etc., and on sufficient funds for promoting innovations in the media and their dissemination.

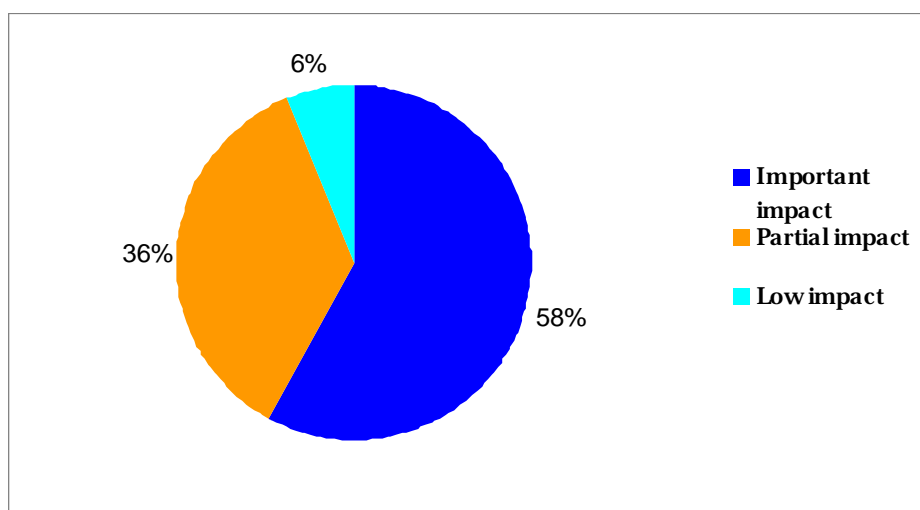
Sample answers:

Sdružení Romů Severní Moravy – Association of Romany People of North Moravia (DP 10):
“With respect to our target group of Romany people, the factor of confidence of this target group is very important, especially confidence in individual people who work with the group and confidence in our organisation as a whole.”

The expert organisation (DP 55) Návraty – Coming Back (managed by Střední škola technická Most – Velebudice – Secondary Technical School in Most - Velebudice), which established IMPULS consulting and information points, designates “an individual approach and the decision of a target group on entering the offered consulting and education services” as most significant.

What is the level of contribution of the empowerment principle to the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities? In the opinion of the DP representatives, the influence of empowerment is beneficial – either essentially or partially at least.

Diagram 14: The contribution of empowerment to fighting discrimination and inequalities on the labour market



Source: Questionnaire survey

6.4 Empowerment and Other CIP EQUAL Principles

In empirical terms, this question may be answered only indirectly, on the grounds of ancillary findings and based on an opinion supported by knowledge of DP practice. We believe that empowerment has a positive effect on the partnership scope and depth, on the development of innovation tools, and on prospects with regard to successful mainstreaming.

Partial findings particularly include the following four:

- Regular comments,
- Forms of target group involvement
- Target group impact on mainstreaming
- Forms of activities

6.4.1 Regular Comments

Regular comments from the DP partners and target group involvement aid in the development of innovation tools and thereby, they enhance the efficiency of other principles, within the framework of both project management and implementation. This has been already suggested by the responses of the DP partners provided within the survey organised by IREAS.

Table 46: What factors aid in the development of innovation tools during project management?

% of answers	Regular comments from DP partners	Target group involvement in project management
I highly agree	45.8	27.2
I agree	46.7	35.2
I disagree	0.8	25.4
I highly disagree	0.8	2.6
I do not know	5.9	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Questionnaire survey

The majority - two thirds - of the survey participant confirm the usefulness of target group involvement in project management for innovation tool development. A quarter of the participants, however, do not see comments as beneficial. We have verified statistically that the different rating of the usefulness of involvement is not given by the role in the surveyed DP – in other words, a negative (“I disagree”) attitude to the issue was expressed by approximately one quarter of the respondents from each group: i.e. main partner, partial activity executor, partial programme or activity coordinator.

Considering the fact that 28% from the total number of respondents were not satisfied, we may state that there are differences between individuals from various NTN. The best rating was given by participants from NTN B (Enterprise Foundation Process and Development of Individual Entrepreneurial Activities), and the worst rating by participants from NTN F (Integration of Foreigners on the labour market). The identified rating differences arise from the divergent target groups of the DP participating in NTN B and NTN F.

Table 47: Does target group involvement in project and management aid in innovation tool development?

In %	NTN						Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
I highly agree	33.3	45.5	22.2	35.3	18.2	25.0	31.0
I agree	33.3	54.5	44.4	35.3	45.5	12.5	38.0
I disagree	33.3	0.0	33.3	23.5	27.3	62.5	28.2
I highly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	9.1	0.0	2.8
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total respondents	15	11	9	17	11	8	71

Source: Questionnaire survey

Table 48: What factors aid in the development of innovation tools during the management of your project?

In %	Target group involvement in project management	Regular comments from DP partners
I highly agree	40.7	44.2
I agree	42.5	47.0
I disagree	8.0	4.4
I highly disagree	1.7	0.0
I do not know	7.1	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire survey shows that a clear majority (80 – 90%) of the DP representatives believe that the development of innovation tools within the framework of project management is aided by both target group involvement and regular comments from the DP partners.

6.4.2 Forms of Target Group Involvement

In this connection, we focused on how and/or at what quality were target groups included in the DP work. Common classification recognises five levels of involvement:

- Informedness (target groups are informed);
- Consulting (target groups opinions are heard out);
- Participation (target groups provide advice and information to DP);
- Co-operation (target groups negotiate and affect results);
- Delegation (target groups are partially empowered to decide independently).

This structure shows that each higher level presumes the existence of a lower level – e.g. if all partners are to be heard out, they need to be informed (i.e. the Guttman Scale principle).

In summary, the survey participants mostly rated the individual forms of target group involvement positively: 54% rated the given form as very successful, 41% as successful, while only 5% as unsuccessful and none as very unsuccessful.

An analysis of the responses suggests that the prevailing level of involvement of target groups was (one-sided) informedness and (two-sided) consulting. The “Number” table column shows a simple sum of answers. The right column provides an estimate of the share of RP (in %¹³⁰) practicing this form, regardless of the fact, whether they rated it as successful or unsuccessful.

According to our estimate and based on self-evaluation of the approached DP representatives, the number of DP where target groups were empowered to decide independently is thus not more than 15 out of 69. If we consider delegation as target group involvement in empowerment, we may conclude that empowerment was put into practice in a minority of the functioning DP – i.e. in approximately one fifth. However, if cases when target groups negotiate and affect results are also considered as empowerment, then empowerment was put into practice in approximately 25 DP.

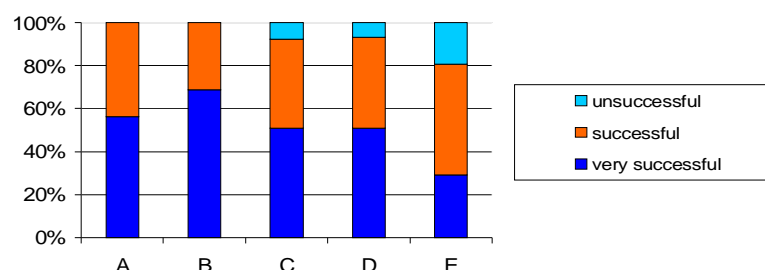
Table 49: Forms of target group involvement in DP

	Form of involvement	Number	% of DP
A	Informedness (target groups are informed)	76	50
B	Consulting (target groups opinions are heard out)	70	46
C	Participation (target groups provide advice and information to DP)	65	43
D	Co-operation (target groups negotiate and affect results)	57	38
E	Delegation (target groups are partially empowered to decide independently)	31	21

Source: Structured interviews

¹³⁰ Before the survey, 69 DP in total were involved in Action 2 and 3. Nevertheless, our estimate is based on the presumption that DP members share the same tendency to answer the IREAS web survey questions.

Diagram 15: Ratio of successful and unsuccessful types of involvement



Source: Questionnaire survey

While no problems were encountered in the area of informedness and consulting, higher forms of involvement – participation, co-operation and delegation – manifest discontent (ranging from 7 – 20% of answers ¹³¹). This is undoubtedly associated with the organisational and communication-related demands of the higher forms of involvement.

Above, we have pointed to the fact that the individual levels are of a cumulative nature and that they may be jointly approached as the Guttman Scale. The consistence of the responses is high (only 4 were erroneous, e.g. the respondent claimed they had informed target groups in their DP and had consulted them, which seems illogical— we have therefore decided to correct these errors in favour of the DP).

Considering the structure of the survey respondents and summary of all DP, we may estimate that delegation, as the highest form of target group involvement in project implementation, was utilised by approximately a fifth of DP (by a fifth of them unsuccessfully).

We have attempted to verify the assumption that delegation was usually applied at DP where the partner organisations associated members of target groups. Their participation in empowerment within the DP was thus easy and natural. Nevertheless, further research with six DP (1, 11, 35, 18, 42 and 63) did not confirm the same. We did not find any relationship between the integration of organisations with target groups into DP and the claimed delegation of competences to target groups.

As regards satisfaction with the individual forms of involvement, the results may be expressed in a condensed manner if the individual levels of satisfaction (1 – 4) represent “school grades” allowing the interpretation of arithmetic rating averages. In this case, average satisfaction may be expressed simply – the highest satisfaction is with consulting and the lowest with delegation:

¹³¹ It should be noted, however, that the results only include answers of respondents provided in relation to the subject form and not those who did not provide an answer, usually due to not being familiar with the relevant form of involvement.

Table 50: Rating of satisfaction with the forms of target group involvement

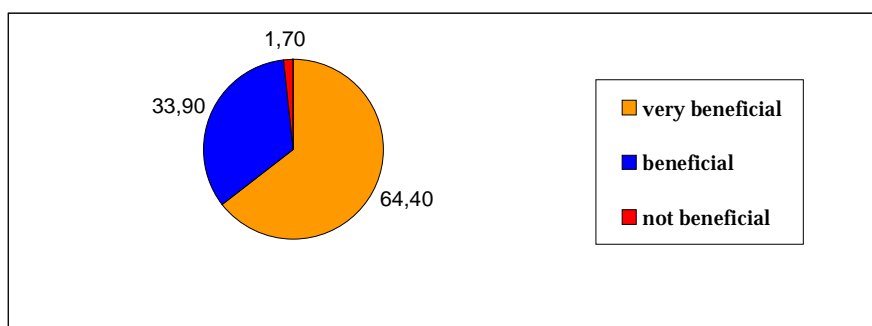
	Answers	Average
Informedness	76	1.42
Consulting	70	1.31
Participation	65	1.57
Co-operation	57	1.56
Delegation	31	1.90

Source: Questionnaire survey

6.4.3 Influence of Target Groups on Mainstreaming

Practically all DP rate the influence of target groups on the success of mainstreaming as beneficial or very beneficial.

Diagram 16: Evaluation of the benefits of empowerment in relation to mainstreaming



Source: Questionnaire survey

Even though this finding is primarily associated with mainstreaming, we believe it is relevant for the empowerment evaluation because the success of innovation mainstreaming would be jeopardised or impaired without the active involvement of target groups. The question was answered by 59 respondents, 98% of which rated the influence of target groups as beneficial or very beneficial.

6.4.4 Forms of Activities

To what extent have the indicated forms of activities contributed to the achievement of the individual DP project objectives? The table shows the percentage rate assigned by the DP according to the influence of the particular form.

Table 51: Evaluation of the form of contribution of the activities to the achievement of the DP objectives

	Strong positive influence	More positive influence	More negative influence	No influence
a) Work in the DP steering committee	53	41	3	3
b) Workgroups within DP	64	25	0	11
c) Participation at NTN meetings	11	57	11	21
d) Implementation of international TCA	21	65	0	14
e) Participation in workshops and seminars	28	54	11	7

Source: Questionnaire survey

Workgroups within DP and the work of steering committees were apparently the most relevant in terms of objective achievement. However, as these forms lead to the active work of participants and thus, affect the scope and content of empowerment, we believe that they support partnership, innovation and mainstreaming of the achieved outputs.

6.5 Foreign Experience in Empowerment

6.5.1 Target Group Involvement in Empowerment in Slovakia

The evaluation team studied many programme and project documents of CIP EQUAL¹³³ in Slovakia, the interim programme evaluation report, websites of the Managing Authority (www.equalslovakia.sk), the national support group (Social Development Fund, www.fsr.gov.sk), as well as of projects selected from among the programme priorities. Interviews were conducted with selected NTN and MA employees.

These information resources provided us with information on CIP EQUAL in Slovakia, which is quite similar to the Czech programme with its five priorities and identical thematic areas. Based on the available information, no evaluation focusing on the assessment of the

¹³² Other forms of involvement comprised conferences, websites and networking of the entities within a region.

¹³³ To ensure terminology consistency, we use the CIP EQUAL abbreviation, but not the Slovak equivalent, i.e. IS EQUAL.

CIP EQUAL principles is underway in Slovakia. A more interesting source utilised during our excursion to Slovakia are analyses of monitored activities and annual reports, especially the 2006 Annual Report of the National Support Structure of CIP EQUAL and interviews with the programme director.

All the above-mentioned information resources provided us with sufficient data to evaluate the fulfilment of the empowerment principle. We present only some of the interesting findings in aggregate, as well as partially to the principle under review. We have chosen the option of monitoring according to thematic networks and not thematic areas.

Selected Findings

The empowerment principle may be identified in the activities monitored within CIP EQUAL in Slovakia by means of:

- Active involvement of target groups in the executed activities that are directly designated for disadvantaged target groups, e.g. by developing own projects,
- Involvement of target groups in the presentation of project results within the framework of publication, supranational and mainstreaming activities (presentation of own projects or other contributions),
- Involvement of target groups in activity preparation and execution, material and document preparation, and in the development of educational modules intended for them,
- Development and preparation of activities and projects directly by actors from a target group for the particular target group (examples include managers of maternity centres who are or have been mothers on maternity leave themselves).

Table 52: Overview of National Thematic Networks and Number of DP in 2007

NATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORK	ASSOCIATED MEASURES	NUMBER OF DP
A = NTN for employment	1.1 Developing a system for prevention and support of placement of long-term unemployed, poorly qualified and other disadvantaged groups on the labour market	22
B = NTN pro social economy	2.1 Enhancing the capacity of non-governmental and other social economy organisations as actors alleviating inequalities on the labour market	24
C = NTN for enterprise and employee adaptability	3.1 Supporting the creation of an environment stimulating the development of human resources and securing their adaptability in the process of structural changes and deployment of new technologies	21
D = NTN for equal opportunities	4.1 Gender research, gender audit and sensitivity as means for achieving gender equality in the market	14
E = NTN for fighting against discrimination, racism and xenophobia	1.2 Creating an environment supporting the identification and creation of effective solutions to fight against all forms of discrimination, racism, and	17

	xenophobia on the labour market	
	5.1 Supporting social and labour integration of asylum seekers	

Note: Associated measures represent the main measure falling within the focus of the particular NTN. Nonetheless, it does not exclude the participation of DP members from other measures in the particular NTN if they believe that their project outputs correspond more to another thematic area than the NTN selected by them.

Source: Annual Report of NSS CIP EQUAL for the years 2006 and 2007

NTN A – Long-term unemployed individuals were included and they were actively involved in planning and further project development (e.g. drawing up of own career plans), which significantly supported an active approach of target groups.

NTN B – Representatives of target groups participated in the creation of materials, activity content and organisation. An interesting example of the fulfilment of the empowerment principle was multi-level preparation designated for the creators of community rehabilitation and community planning strategies where individual participants educated each other in specific areas and determined the content of the planned activities.

NTN C – Representatives of target groups utilised and disseminated information through a web forum for course participants, they finalised the form of education based on the suggestions of the participants.

NTN D – International conferences of maternity centres were organised by the target group representatives themselves – by women on or after maternity leave.

Another interesting example is a project aimed at educating future trainers in the area of gender mainstreaming where the participants prepared their own projects and consulted the team of lecturers. Through reports on their progress in project planning, the participants thus contributed to the shaping of the programme and they shared common responsibility for the project activities.

NTN E – The target group participated in developing a textbook of the Slovak language for asylum seekers. The specific needs of the target group are taken into account within individual lessons. The asylum seekers are also actively involved in the supported employment. The project team therefore receives valuable information and feedback, which serves as the basis for the artistic methodology of the programme and the highly individualised approach in the process of placement on the labour market.

Interesting Facts about the Project

Unlike Czech CIP EQUAL, the Slovak programme provides financial support to a larger number of projects and/or DP. A total of 98 projects are thematically divided into five National Thematic Networks (NTN), which have their own mainstreaming strategies and they regularly monitor the fulfilment of particular tasks. We have noticed that since the beginning of the programme implementation, the Managing Authority and especially the Slovak CIP EQUAL NSS had given great attention to the determination of mainstreaming activities in all DP, as well as to the mainstreaming activities of NTN and their evaluation.

Significant attention was pointed at activity products and the individual DP submitted reports on their products at NTN meetings.

We have also noticed special attention directed at a Romany target group and their involvement in the implementation of project activities targeted at working with this group.

We have also taken notice of several projects aimed at the target group of individuals sentenced to imprisonment where the DP focused their activity on their motivation in order to increase their involvement in the project activities. Subsequently, they supported the growth of self-esteem of these individuals and thereby, their will and chances to succeed on the labour market.¹³⁴ Good co-operation with employers was a substantial motivation element.

Projects focused on supporting entrepreneurial activities of the disadvantaged group of women are present in both the Czech and Slovak environment. Their activities are similar to the activities of Czech projects, which provide consulting services in the form of personal consulting, mentoring, and training. In Slovakia, we have also taken note of a project, a part of which was aimed at aiding financial institutions in providing loans to launch enterprise activities of women.¹³⁵

The conclusion arising from our short excursion to Slovakia is that Slovak implementing structures did not work with the programme principles as intensively as in the Czech Republic. Less attention was given to the principles and precise criteria for their fulfilment were not defined.

6.6.3 Target Group Involvement in Empowerment in the United Kingdom

As already indicated by the first round of CIP EQUAL in the United Kingdom, the fulfilment of the empowerment principle presented the greatest obstacle for most DP.

Based on the experience from the first round, involvement in empowerment may be divided into individual groups (Mid-Term Evaluation of the UK/GB EQUAL Community Initiative 2000-2006, GHK Consulting and the Gilfillan Partnership, 2006) as follows:

- Involvement of individuals (90% of DP),
- Involvement of organisations (67%),
- Involvement of groups (48%),

Involvement of actors in empowerment resulted in subsequent effects in a number of areas. As mentioned in the Mid-Term Evaluation Update, the approaches to the empowerment principle may be divided into two basic groups: i.e. main activities, which mainly include capacity creation and participation in the DP activity forming and execution, and secondary activities, which comprise active participation in the DP structure, involvement in dissemination activities (e.g. presentation at conferences) and informal activities.

¹³⁴ The Andosa Project, NTN A.

¹³⁵ The Integra Project, www.integra.sk, www.happyland.sk.

The most interesting activities aimed at the fulfilment of the empowerment principle included fulfilment by means of pilot activities, in particular products and services. In some cases, target groups were guided to directly participate in the execution of project activities.

Another effective way of target group involvement is the development and execution of project activities, in which almost a third of all DP took part in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, however, involvement in the formal DP management was not as frequent and many DP considered it as less effective.

NTN Activities

Eight National Thematic Networks were functioning in the United Kingdom, i.e. one NTN for each theme. Their mission was to secure a connection between DP and policy makers. The role of NTN was to link the needs of policy makers with the suppliers/implementers of the particular requirements, i.e. DP. This was to secure that EQUAL programme outputs would be relevant for both the present and future policy.

The objectives of individual NTN in the United Kingdom are more or less congruent to those known from practice in the Czech NTN. We have ascertained that NTN played a significant role in the preparation and implementation of mainstreaming plans, in establishing and developing partnership, as well as in individual DP activities.

As in the CR, the individual thematic networks processed their mainstreaming activities, which contained the expected DP outputs, the anticipated target audience of the mainstreaming outputs, and DP activities, methodology and schedules. These NTN strategies also included activities supporting the fulfilment of the innovation, partnership, equal opportunity, and empowerment principles. The documents served as fundamental resources and were reviewed in 2006, for example, when new political priorities had arisen.

The National Support Structure (NSS) of the CIP EQUAL programme in the United Kingdom provided substantial support for the implementation of the individual NTN mainstreaming strategies. The character of the support was based on meetings with policy makers, public agencies, on the implementation of educational events and seminars for DP, on informing about CIP EQUAL at various events, on disseminating examples of good practice, etc.

Examples from Practice – Interconnection at the European Level

The National Thematic Network A in the United Kingdom (NTN A) developed a questionnaire, which it distributed among the individual DP involved in the network. The questionnaire results were used to develop co-operation opportunities, especially through increasing employer involvement, through raising interest and establishing a network with the concerned DP in the area of target group involvement on the labour market.

Successful examples of NTN A activities include the networking of several projects of DP from England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, e.g. IMPACT DP (HM Prison Service), EXODUS DP (SEEDA). These DP exclusively worked with a target group of former delinquents, further divided into specific groups. The efforts of the DP were jointly aimed at identifying examples of good practice, material and expertise sharing, and thereby, at maximising the potential of dissemination and enforcement at the national and European level.

Moreover, DP from NTN A and NTN B united their efforts in relation to specific activities focusing on work with former delinquents. Some DP allied with their counterparts abroad and were thus able to formulate the requirements on political actors at the European level.

Thanks to the activities of the particular DP, three countries – i.e. the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Germany – therefore became the driving force with respect to the political theme of former delinquents at the European level.

Examples from Practice – Impacts on Policy

Many innovative approaches to the work with the above-mentioned target group of former delinquents, generated by CIP EQUAL projects in the United Kingdom, were processed in the form of political documents¹³⁶ and presented to politicians at the national (British) and European level. CIP EQUAL thus provided examples of good practice, which link the present policy with the implementation of the relevant priorities. These “policy briefs” point to the benefit arising from the lesson learnt from the CIP EQUAL programme, which they link to the relevant aspects of the present policy in the area of delinquents. They include, among others, the following:

- Adopting a common approach to delinquents, which includes in-prison and out-of-prison services (special training relevant to the labour market);
- Providing services focused on preparing delinquents who have the necessary life and professional knowledge for the labour market;
- Ensuring that the key actors are duly involved and provide support to former delinquents and employers;
- Proposing relevant political measures to assist delinquents in their jobs;
- Securing female and youth-specific measures in the target group of delinquents.

Similar “policy briefs” summarising experience with CIP EQUAL programme activities have been also drawn up for other target groups and they represent a summary of the impacts on policy and on sustainability after the termination of the CIP EQUAL programme.

Examples from Practice – Interconnection at the Regional Level

In some cases, DP allied on a regional basis, e.g. the West Midlands network of eight (8) DP in the region drew up a joint plan covering the identification of common themes, coordination of mainstreaming activities aimed at avoiding duplicity, and common dissemination activity planning.

Conclusion

The objective of the empowerment principle is to support excluded groups of individuals in assuming responsibility for and control over their lives. At the same time, it is aimed at changing the system and approaches and at allowing disadvantaged groups to participate on the labour market and the society.

¹³⁶ "Policy Briefs", <http://www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/resources/>.

The empowerment principle idea is closely associated with the innovation principle as the programme combines employment strategy with the strategy for eliminating social exclusion and this is a challenging task requiring a new way of thinking and approaches.

We see the main difference of CIP EQUAL in the United Kingdom and the CR, including NTN activities, in the longer period of implementation of the programme itself, as well as individual DP projects. Several rounds facilitated to gain experience especially within the framework of Action 2 and Action 3. Thus, the DP were capable of focusing their activities at achieving maximum efficiency with regard to target group involvement and at the same time, at directing mainstreaming activities. As particularly significant, we see the activity based on consulting the developed products of individual DP with the relevant social partners and policy makers prior to the commencement of implementation activities in the subject DP.

Eight National Thematic Networks were functioning in the United Kingdom, i.e. one NTN for each theme.

The NTN in the United Kingdom associated a much larger number of DP, while only five NTN were functioning in the CR with a lower number of DP.

As in the CR, the empowerment principle was new for many partners and the NSS therefore offered their assistance in the form of seminars, workshops, and guidebooks. The fulfilment of the empowerment principle was supervised by means of monitoring visits and by analysing monitoring reports submitted by all DP.

6.6 New Developments in the Method of Empowerment Implementation

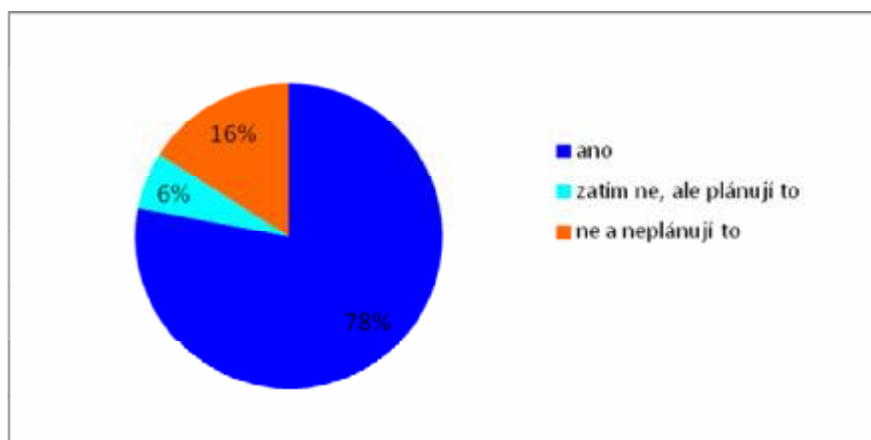
Before analysing the determined evaluation questions, a logical question to ask is to what level were the target groups involved in DP preparation and implementation.

In the final report of the Second Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme EQUAL (December 2006), the authors indicate: "The empowerment principle is currently considered as very important, although it cannot be applied at the partnership level in some cases. The issue of empowerment of target groups is too complex, as the partnership must involve the target group in all phases and activities, including management, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation."

In March 2008, however, we cannot fully agree with this conclusion: As repeatedly notified by DP (this is documented by monitoring reports, the questionnaire survey, and interviews), they succeeded in involving target groups also in empowerment.

This has also been confirmed by a survey conducted among 33 DP in March 2008: Approximately three fifths of DP directly involved members of target groups in the course of the execution of the project. Only five DP (16%) did not and do not plan to do so, probably because they do not work directly with clients looking for a job on the labour market.

Diagram 17: Achieving involvement of target groups in the decision-making



Source: Questionnaire survey

Table 53: Involvement of target groups in the decision-making

Organisation	DP name	Form of involvement
RPIC-ViP	Competences for the labour market	Involvement in verification training – provision of feedback – its systematic evaluation and use for the purpose of product finalisation
Re-qualification and information centre	Delta	Evaluation of project activities, participation and presentations at conferences
“Association of Romany People of North Moravia”	ROMA	Target groups participated in methodology verification and the methodology or training content was adjusted according to their suggestions
Czech Union of Women	MOPPS	“Už nejsem sama doma” (I am Not Home Alone Any More) club, workshop and seminar discussions, in workgroups within the final conference
Dopravní vzdělávací institut, a.s.	Outplacement	Analysis of target group needs by means of a questionnaire survey. Continuous evaluation of the services provided by the centre among its clients and gathering suggestions for complementation and optimisation within the framework of individual seminars/lectures and consulting sessions
Langmaster group	A teleworking chance	Co-operation on the preparation of training material
IQ Roma servis	IQ services ...	Continuous consulting of activities
Sjednocená organizace nevidomých a slabozrakých –	Tyfloemploy	Target group representatives had the opportunity to evaluate the effected activities by way of distributed evaluation questionnaires or they could present their comments and suggestions orally

United Organisation of the Blind and Visually Impaired of the CR		
Centrum pro komunitní práci – Centre for Community Work	Supporting unemployed in rural areas	Target groups were directly involved in product development – all its aspects were discussed (in the form of questionnaires or interviews) with the target group
Rytmus	Rytmus	Decisions concerning nominations for the Equal Chance competition, good practice monitoring, participation at seminars

Almost a half of the respondents (45%) confirmed that, compared to Action 1, some form of target group involvement was utilised in their DP. These forms include:

- Target group involvement in the evaluation of developed products,
- Target group involvement in the evaluation of educational and consulting programmes,
- Negotiations with target group representatives concerning the situation on the labour market and possible changes,
- Workshops, seminars, consulting, training courses and conferences,
- Employment in newly established social firms,
- Feedback in relation to courses, evaluation questionnaires, round-table discussions.

This overview shows, however, that DP often experience a coalescence of the empowerment of target group representatives with their involvement in the DP activities. This is also suggested by interviews with the DP representatives. The fact that target groups are the subject of care or other actions is not necessarily associated with their actual scope of involvement in decisions on further development and innovation tool application. Therefore, we have to view the indicated 45% of cases of the new forms of involvement of target groups (in empowerment) with certain detachment and realistically contemplate a lower number of positive cases.

Has a “new model” of DP management appeared that would involve target groups? We believe not. As indicated by the mentioned report from the second phase of ongoing evaluation, 15 DP out of 20 deploy a centralised management model. In most cases, this is the result of the administrative demands of the project, the associated “pressure” of (non)key partners on higher centralisation, as well as of the finding that decentralised management is more expensive, more complex, and more challenging.

In this respect, qualitative innovation was not observed and it seems that in case of common decision-making, initiative lies almost fully on the DP head organisation, which prepares basic documents for negotiations, proposals for changes, and decisions, etc. Most partners (whether target groups, service providers, or service submitters) adopt the same following a discussion and with partial changes (or without them), or they secure partial basic documents. Even though target group representatives receive information and review submitted proposals, they mostly are not active decision makers. This, however, does not usually apply to well-functioning non-profit organisations with a sufficient number of personnel, which bring together members of target groups and have their professional representatives in a DP (e.g. Národní rada zdravotně postižených – Czech National Disability Council).

How did the DP representatives evaluate involvement of target groups in their DP? The left column in the table below shows the assigned grades, whereas 1 is the lowest rating (minimum involvement or satisfaction) and 6 means that the “principle was fulfilled according to the best national and international experience”¹³⁷.

Table 54: Rating of target group involvement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
Representation of target group involvement	0	7	5	18	25	33	4.83
Independence of involved target group	2	2	5	10	31	30	4.98
Timeliness of target group involvement (so that they may affect the DP results)	2	7	2	13	39	23	4.77
Target group influence on partnership	3	5	5	23	20	18	4.42
Transparency of target group involvement	2	3	8	13	28	23	4.70
Access to funds	3	3	8	8	13	13	4.30
Access to information resources	3	5	5	11	31	28	4.75
Clear definition of tasks	3	5	5	26	15	26	4.53
Target group involvement cost efficiency	2	2	5	7	25	28	4.61

Source: Questionnaire survey

The results show that most respondents rated target group involvement in the project with grades 5 or 6, or from 4 to 6, i.e. quite positively.

The independence of the involved target groups received the best rating, while their access to funds was rated the worst.

If we divide the respondents into NTN and count the group evaluation arithmetic averages, we may confirm based on analysis of variance that statistically most significant differences

¹³⁷ The following overview shows the optimism of the evaluations as a whole – usually at least a quarter ranked themselves "among the best national and international experience".

among NTN may be found in the area of target group representation, access to information resources, and involvement transparency. In short, these three viewpoints represent the major differences among NTN.

Target group involvement in DP processes is envisaged by the MA in its guidebook for the validation of CIP EQUAL products (published on www.equalcr.cz), according to which validation discussions should include, among other participants, target groups (or individuals disadvantaged on the labour market) who, in compliance with the empowerment principle, may express their opinion on the usability of the product and ensure that any presented product modifications correspond to their own needs.

6.6.1 The Level of Influence of the Individual Forms of Partner and Target Group Involvement on the Formulation of DP objectives

The level of influence of the individual forms of partner and target group involvement in the decision—making processes within the framework of the formulation of DP objectives is associated with the initial phase of DP establishment, i.e. Action 1.

Facts have arisen from structured interviews, showing that, apart from beneficiaries, also DP partners participated in the formulation of DP objectives, whereas the majority of the respondents within structured interviews (95%) evaluated their involvement as essential. This fact is associated with the fulfilment of the partnership principle, to which another chapter of the report is dedicated.

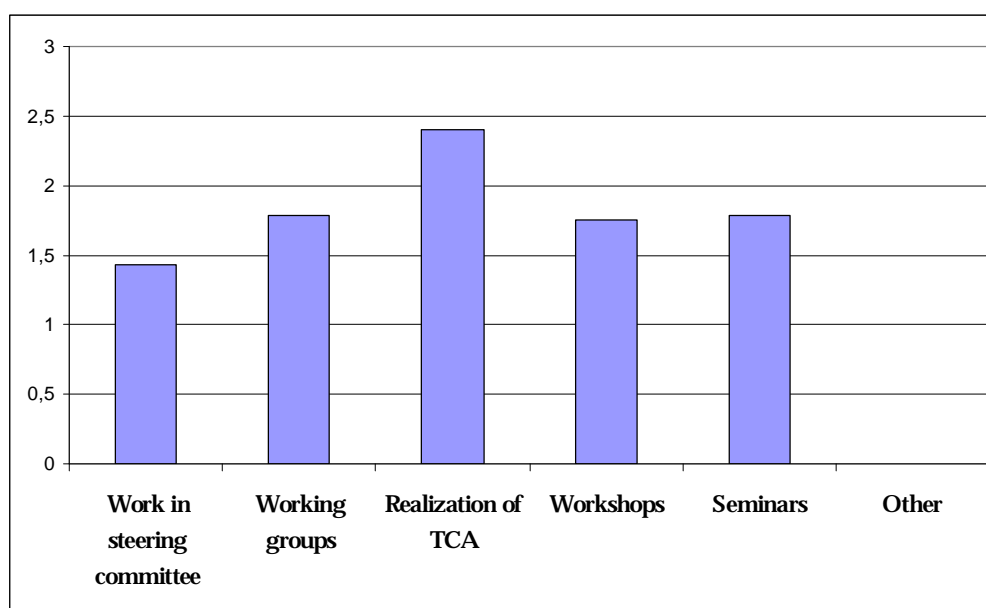
The individual respondents determined the period required for the formulation of DP objectives at between 1 week and 3 months. All beneficiaries agreed that they would choose the same procedure for the formulation of objectives if the situation were to repeat itself. The procedure was based on involving partners especially in the preparation of basic data and individual parts of the project, such as the budget, activity schedule, and comments. It is also worthwhile to examine the aspect of previous partner co-operation prior to the implementation of a CIP EQUAL project. It points to the experience of partners. A total of 35% of the respondents indicated that they had co-operated with partners in training activities within the framework of the Active Employment Policy, 17% on policy development, 62% on common projects, 55% on common information campaigns, and 7% of the respondents indicated entrepreneurial activities as a form of previous co-operation. From the point of view of partner involvement, participation in common projects and common training activities seems the most interesting. The platform that was most significant for formulating objectives was the supreme DP body, i.e. either the DP steering committee or the action committee. Despite their different names, these bodies were the supreme DP bodies comprising of all or key partners (within the conducted interviews, the evaluators have reached the conclusion that the existence of partners who concurrently were not key partners was mainly observed among DP with 10 and more partners). All the respondents agreed that the number of partners was important for both formulating DP objectives and subsequent project implementation.

6.6.2 The Level of Influence of the Selected Forms of Partner and Target Group Involvement on Achieving DP objectives

The factors, which, with a view to the partnership and empowerment principle, influence the achievement of DP objectives, are the number of individual partners and the division of competences and responsibilities among the partners.

While in DP with up to 10 partners, the essential platform is the steering committee, in DP with up to 20 partners, these are workgroups. This may be explained by the fact that in small DP, the steering committee comprises all partners, and its significance thus increases. This fact is shown by the diagram below:

Diagram 18: Evaluating the methods of work in DP



Note: The lower the rating, the higher the significance of the particular method of work

Source: Questionnaire survey

Moreover, most DP indicated the application of the centralised management model within the structured interviews. Nonetheless, all DP monitored within Action 2 have established workgroups based on thematic orientation. It has been ascertained that the provision of information among individual workgroups was effected by means of an output from the group manager to the coordination group, which is subject to the DP MA, by way of discussion forums and/or through bulk or personal e-mails and personal meetings. Thus, based on structured interviews conducted with 20 DP, we indicate the utilised forms of partner involvement affecting the achievement of DP objectives:

In one DP, workgroups were merged as a result of the activities of specific workers. In addition, even if it was not a system solution, it seemed to be working in this particular case. A popular form of involvement also included the intranet as a document depository or

forums. Within DP, target groups influence the achievement of objectives in two ways, which correspond to the approach of individual DP to the empowerment principle as such. At the first level, target groups influence the achievement of DP outputs, as well as their form and quality, indirectly through concrete partners. In this respect, expressing opinions within the framework of evaluation activities inside the DP may be considered as the direct influence of target groups.

6.7 To What Level Were the Individual Actors Able to Participate in Acquiring Experience, Learning and Decision-Making within DP

6.7.1 Mutual Effect of Empowerment and Partnership

A possible overlap with the partnership principle depends on the approach to the empowerment and partnership principle. Before proceeding to their derivation, let us summarise the definition of both the principles.

The basic materials of the support provider define partnership as an association of entities from different areas that are united into a development partnership for identifying factors resulting in inequalities on the labour market (EC 2000). The partnership should interconnect the outputs and resources of the individual partners with the aim of achieving innovative solutions to jointly defined problems. This definition implies two preconditions:

- The partnership principle presumes certain partner uniqueness in terms of their of material orientation, and
- It anticipates their active participation in the implementation of jointly formulated objectives.

The second point thus distinctly implies the necessity of dividing competences and responsibilities within DP.

The empowerment principle is generally characterised as “the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make effective decisions and to transform those decisions into desired actions and outcomes” (EC 2000).

In a narrower sense, empowerment is interpreted as participation of all those to whom support is designated in the implementation of project activities (EC 2000).

If we view empowerment as active participation of partners (and through them, the indirect participation of target groups), we arrive at the conclusion that empowerment as such is a “subset” of partnership. The evaluator of the previous phase of evaluation of CIP EQUAL in the CR (EuroserviceGroup 2006) reached a similar conclusion. This connection between the two principles is also suggested by the opinion of the evaluator of Community Initiative EQUAL (Dahan 2006, page 57).

In other words, partnership is a general, formal framework of co-operation among entities from various areas and empowerment is one of the aspects, which may be summarised as a just division of roles among partners in terms of decision-making.

6.7.2 Decision-Making

As mentioned above the term decision-making within DP is not actually defined in the Czech environment. If we start from the fact that decision-making is the result of a cognitive mental process leading to a selection of an alternative, then, in an environment involving project management, it is decision-making within individual project phases. In accordance with foreign procedures (GB EQUAL Support Unit 2004, Dahan 2006), we stem from the American project and organisation planning and management model, i.e. project cycle management. It comprises five basic areas, which include project preparation, implementation and subsequent evaluation. In concrete terms, it represents identification of a particular issue, project preparation, its implementation and subsequent evaluation.

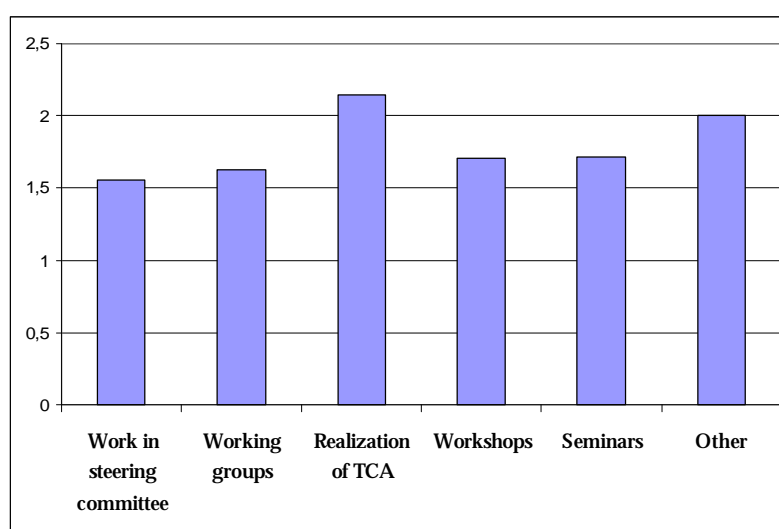
The mutual effect of the partnership and empowerment principle in terms of decision-making was thus evaluated within the PCM framework of individual projects.

Decision-Making by Partners

In individual DP, there are various models of involvement of partners in project preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation, and these were summarised in the previous chapters. Centralised and decentralised management models have their advantages and disadvantages, which are based on the number of partners in a particular DP.

As regards partner involvement in decision-making, participation in workgroups (50% respondents), and steering committees (47%) were rated as the most significant in the questionnaire survey. Participation in workshops (46%) and involvement in the form of seminars (43%) were rated as less significant, yet still important – as documented by the diagram below. It shows the importance of the individual forms regardless of the partnership size.

Diagram 19: The importance of the individual forms of partner involvement regardless of the partnership size

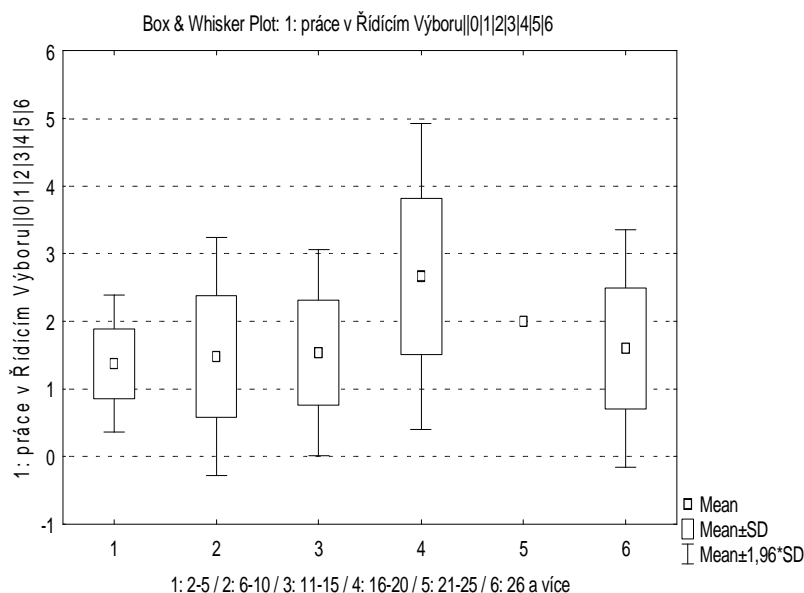


Note: Declining values indicate increased importance

Source: Questionnaire survey

A comparison of the size of individual DP, however, shows interesting facts. An ascertainment was made during the questionnaire survey, indicating that the more partners a DP has, the higher the influence of workgroups, and, vice versa, the weaker the relevance of steering committees.

Diagram 20: Significance of work in the DP steering committee according to DP size



Source: Questionnaire survey

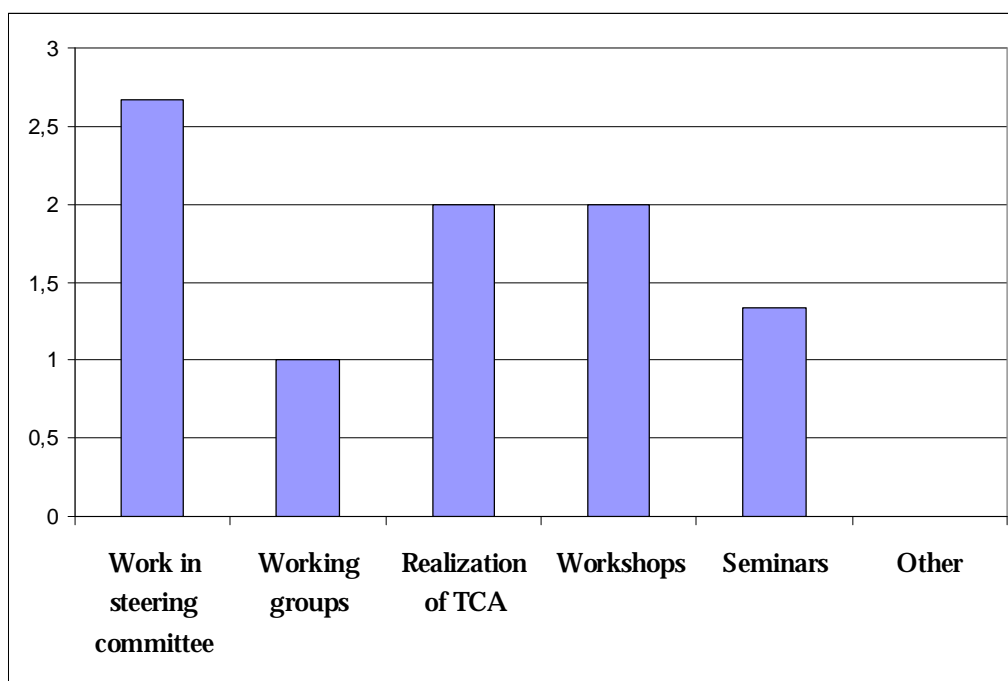
As shown by the diagram, the significance of the steering committee never reached negative values (6 – negative contribution). Another diagram indicates the perception of the individual forms of partner involvement. While in smaller DP, the steering committee is rated very positively, it was a complete flop among DP with a larger number of partners.

Nevertheless, where DP have more than 20 partners, their perception of the steering committee is more positive.

Only 5 out of 20 respondents within structured interviews confirmed the finding that workgroups are more important than the steering committee when it comes to implementing a project with more partners.

One of the reasons is the composition of respondents. While within structured interviews, the respondents were the main partner representatives, the questionnaire survey respondents also included common partners. Such data are essential for determining the relationship between the partnership principle and the empowerment principle, because these principles amalgamate namely in workgroups and steering committees. With respect to these forms, the principles tend to amalgamate especially by way of dividing task, collecting data for monitoring purposes, submitting documents when accounting for costs for monitoring reports, etc.

Diagram 21: Evaluation of the forms of partner involvement in larger DP



Note: Declining values indicate increased importance

Source: Questionnaire survey

Structured interviews conducted with representatives of the main partners of 20 DP, as well as analyses of documents of beneficiaries related to empowerment imply the following facts. In all examined DP, partners are able to directly participate in empowerment, i.e. by participating in workgroups and/or the DP MA. An alternative option includes partner involvement through a DP assembly. Whereas the ultimate decision, with the exception of one of the examined DP, usually lies on the beneficiary receiving support. This situation is understandable because it is the beneficiary who, based on a contractual relationship with the support provider, bears all the risks associated with the project execution. In connection with workgroups, an ascertainment was made in two DP that the workgroup type, which markedly takes into consideration target group needs, was methodically oriented. This finding, however, could not be further verified during the phase as the evaluator gained access to methodical DP materials only in these two cases.

Nonetheless, we may presume that a similar condition exists in other DP. The evaluator arrived at this conclusion on the grounds that Community Initiative CIP EQUAL is indeed based on the creation and verification of pilot programmes aimed at finding new approaches to eliminate disparities on the labour market.

Within the decision-making process, the approaches of individual partners to their participation in the DP are quite interesting. In the first case, the partners perceive DP objectives comprehensively and they approach them accordingly. Quite the opposite is the approach where partners focus solely on partial solutions that are associated with their tasks within the fulfilment of individual activities. The third approach, which is minor in terms of relevance, is an approach where the fulfilment of project objectives is lateral for partners and they consider the project as an “order” – thus, we may speak of a strong financial motive.

Nevertheless, the first approach where partners understand their role in a project within an overall DP context prevails. This indicates a marked, circumstantial positive effect of CIP EQUAL execution where the commitment to achieve project objectives predominates over a purely business approach.

Decision-Making by Target Groups

Based on the above, it is possible to affirm that within individual DP, the empowerment principle is viewed at two levels as regards decision-making at the target group level, i.e. at the level of direct and indirect target group participation.

As to indirect participation, the empowerment principle is fulfilled through partners representing the target groups within the framework of project management. As to direct participation of target groups in decision-making, the empowerment principle is fulfilled through participation at conferences, in dissemination and through involvement in objection mechanisms prior to, during, or after ending their participation in project activities. These mechanisms are namely based on questionnaire surveys targeted at DP and on individual consultations of mentors and consultants with a target group.

It should be emphasised, though, that the outputs represent recommendations, opinions without actual weight in relation to decision-making. Only in one of the surveyed DP, the target group actually and actively participated in the decision-making process when a workgroup comprising clients was established during the implementation of project activities. A question remains, whether and how are the recommendations of this workgroup accepted by DP representatives, and what is the actual weight of the recommendations of the workgroup compared to other DP workgroups.

6.7.3 Acquiring Experience

In order to ascertain whether (and/or to what level) the empowerment principle is affected by the partnership principle in terms of acquiring experience by the target group, it is necessary to define what is actually meant by acquiring experience. At the same time, it is an interesting aspect in cases where empowerment is conceived as a process or a product by a specific DP.

In addition, we must point out, though, that acquisition of experience by individual partners proved as a significant aspect within structured interviews. Even though experience acquisition primarily concerns target groups, we also provide a summary of the most frequent forms of partner involvement, owing to which they acquire experience, i.e. participation in workgroups, international partnerships, workshop organisation, and participation at seminars.

Neither Czech nor foreign methodical guidelines for DP clearly indicate what is meant by acquiring experience. If we start from the experience gained by individual Member States in relation to CIP EQUAL, while considering the focus of Community Initiative EQUAL (i.e. elimination of unequal access to the labour market), acquiring experience may be viewed as a process in which a target group primarily increases its personal competencies, i.e. self-confidence, active approach, etc., and at the same time, it acquires, extends and increases its

professional skills. In a general sense, it also constitutes acquisition of any experience at the target group level.

The following methods of experience acquisition by target groups were determined through structured interviews. Even though the DP self-evaluation report implies that educational activities are not considered as fulfilling the empowerment principle in most cases, the basis for acquiring experience by target groups mainly depends on their active involvement in the educational project activities.

An analysis of the data obtained from MSSF Monit suggests that DP, where an educational agency is a member, manifest a statistical tendency to a generally smaller number of course participants who subsequently found a job with an employer, compared to DP where no educational agency is a member. Concurrently with the analysis of the data acquired from MSSF Monit, the relationships between DP whose members are educational agencies and the volume of developed products (i.e. whether the participation of an educational agency influences developed products) were monitored. Nevertheless, the analysis results were statistically insignificant in this case and it is therefore impossible to draw a concrete conclusion. The findings concerning educational agencies, on the other hand, suggest nothing with regard to the quality of the executed educational courses or the demands for the target group – this was not feasible to determine from the volume of acquired basic documents.

Some DP make use of legal consulting activities that allow to take the specific needs of individuals into account. One DP enabled its clients to actively participate in the preparation of methodical materials, such as a digital curriculum vitae or an instruction video focusing on minimum legal knowledge. It also allowed its clients to execute activities outside the project (preparation of a literature-oriented evening).

6.8 Actor Inactivity and Its Relation to the Partnership Principle

According to the mentioned approach to the empowerment principle, this section was divided into identifying the reasons of the inactivity of partners as target group representatives, and subsequent determination of the reasons of the inactivity of target groups, which arise from the option of the direct participation of target groups in decision-making and the option of acquiring experience within DP.

6.8.1 Partner Inactivity and Its Link to the Partnership Principle

As far as participation in the DP decision-making process is concerned, the reasons of conceivable partner inactivity were determined with the aid of desk research focusing on documents of beneficiaries acquired from MA, and an analysis of the outputs of structured interviews with selected beneficiaries. In order to preserve maximum predicative value of the outputs, the same DP were selected for the desk research and structured interviews.

Even if some partial changes in partners occurred between Action 1 and Action 2, only 29% of the respondents indicated partner inactivity as the reason for such change. On the contrary, 58% of the respondents indicated internal partner problems as the reason for such change. These problems were often caused by a different approach to project

implementation and/or in underestimating the administration aspects of the project. A partial answer to the question is also the cessation of activities on the part of a partner, default in payment on the part of MA, inability to provide financial remuneration for project-related activities in public administration bodies, and specialisation of a partner on specific activities, i.e. the partner withdrew after fulfilling its task. The DP where the structured interviews were conducted did not observe partner inactivity, except in one case.

According to evaluators the partnership is based on uniqueness of particular activities with the aim to meet the objectives of the project. As everybody is replaceable, it is not able to take it as absolutely. Uniqueness was taken into account during the evaluation just in the case of specialized activities. It isn't important, whether the partner after finishing its activities stays in the partnership or leaves it.

The above implies that partner inactivity is associated with the partnership principle. Even though dealing with the administrative demands of the project and the financial requirements laid on the actors are indeed challenges, which most DP have to tackle, it is also true that the partner's withdrawal due to such reasons cannot be directly linked with the essence of partnership. Project administration often lies on the beneficiary and the partners provide the beneficiary with partial basic documents. In this respect, dividing the roles, adjusting communication inside DP and assigning responsibilities to individual partners is crucial for a partnership. Nevertheless, no DP has indicated in its self-evaluation report that any of these factors were configured in a manner that would result in major problems during project implementation.

The financial liabilities arising from participation in a project and late refunds on the part of the support provider also present, in the opinion of the evaluator, an area of friction of the partnership and empowerment principle. In this case, it is about feasible expectations, internal risk analyses, and high-quality financial planning of the partners, which is adjusted after consulting the beneficiary and the support provider and prior to entering the project. A supporting argument may be that an absolute majority of the DP is grounded on the previous co-operation of their key partners. According to the questionnaire survey results, the most common activities included joint projects (62%), joint information campaigns (55%), as well as co-operation within the framework of tool application and implementation of active employment policy measures (35%). Only 3% of the respondents indicated that they had not co-operated with partners prior to executing projects within CIP EQUAL.

6.8.2 Target Group Inactivity and Its Link to the Partnership Principle

At the level of a specific DP, the issue of target group activity and/or inactivity is more or less of an individual nature. Target group inactivity thus may depend on the personal traits of individual clients rather than on the participation possibilities offered by the DP representatives. Structured interviews have shown that target groups are very active, depending on the possibilities given by the DP representatives. The available forms of involvement, however, are very limited. It is a fact that in the majority of DP, involvement is limited to participation in objection mechanisms during and/or after ending their participation in the project.

6.9 Summary and Recommendations

- The empowerment principle of Community Initiative CIP EQUAL has not been explicitly amplified to cover the category of policy makers and/or public administration bodies and institutions. It is therefore recommended to adopt the classic triad as the basic model within further application of the EQUAL principles in the CR¹³⁸.
- Empowerment contributes to the development of new tools to fight discrimination and inequalities on the labour market. Regular comments from the DP partners and target group involvement aid in the development of innovation tools and thereby, they enhance the efficiency of other principles, within the framework of both project management and implementation.
- Practically all DP rate the influence of target groups on the success of mainstreaming as beneficial or very beneficial. Workgroups within DP and the work of steering committees were the most relevant in terms of objective implementation. With a view to the participation-based character of these forms, it is possible to conclude that they have supported partnership, innovation and mainstreaming of the achieved results.
- Empowerment has a positive effect on the partnership scope and depth, on the development of innovation tools, and on prospects with regard to successful mainstreaming. Consultations represented the prevailing level of target group involvement. Delegation of responsibility as the supreme form of involvement of target groups in project execution was utilised by minimum DP.
- Almost all the approached DP members considered the influence of target groups on the success of mainstreaming as beneficial or very beneficial. Moreover, their responses indicate that empowerment had a positive effect on the development of innovation tools.
- Target groups were also successfully involved in empowerment - this was achieved in some form in approximately four fifths of DP. The independence of the groups was rated the highest with respect to this form of involvement. As regards new forms of target group involvement, though, an estimate may be made that, compared to Action 1, almost a half of the DP utilise one of the new forms. In most cases, however, involvement and/or other kinds of participation in the results, activities and products are deployed instead of empowerment.
- When evaluating all partial findings, the tendency of the respondents to misinterpret the term of empowerment (influence of desirability), and the methodological options of ascertaining factual benefits, we may estimate that empowerment was demonstrably applied in 20 – 40% of the DP. The result cannot be determined precisely as the content of the term “empowerment” is vague and it stems from an indefinite term of involvement. Accordingly, the same specific involvement of a target group in the DP work is assessed differently by individuals (DP members and evaluators).

¹³⁸ This is the case of the applications of the Act on Social Services, which are compatible with the ESF purpose to a large extent.

- However, for one exception, no target groups were directly invited to participate in the formulation of objectives. This is mainly associated with the thematic areas of individual DP. Target groups often do not possess the sufficient qualities either in the area of project management or professional qualification.
- In case the empowerment and partnership principles overlap, it is possible to determine how individual DP understand the principle. No overlap is possible with regard to direct involvement of target groups by means of consulting and objection mechanisms. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the project implementer actually observes the objections of the target group. And owing to the formal project settings, such participation cannot significantly change the parameters of a project approved by a public entity. An overlap may be identified with regard to indirect involvement of target groups by means of their partners.
- The conducted questionnaire survey, as well as the structured interviews suggest that this form of involvement in combination with the above indicated direct target group involvement is most common. It concurrently allows making allowance for target group needs to the widest extent possible, while efficiently utilising the entrusted funds, without the risk of possible loss of control over the management of the project.
- There is no guidebook for the area of empowerment that would provide a better explanation of the undisputable advantages of empowerment. Here, we also see space for increased NSS activities within on-site consulting. As the end of CIP EQUAL is drawing near, it is advisable for such methodical material to offer options of applying the principle also outside the framework of CIP EQUAL. Finally, it is necessary to point out that the current state is also given by the lack of experience of the project implementers with sufficient support of empowerment. Support of target group empowerment will grow with newly gained experience.

7 Evaluation of Currently Available Impacts at the CR Level¹³⁹

7.1 Methodological approach

7.1.1 Structure and logic of the evaluation framework

A general objective of CIP EQUAL is to develop and promote new tools for fighting all forms of discrimination and inequalities on the labour market with the help of international co-operation. The outcome should thus be a reduction of existing obstacles and support of all disadvantaged groups facing discrimination or unequal treatment, either in employment or during the search for it.

A basic precondition for fulfilling the above objective is the transfer of new procedures and tools developed in individual projects into the “real world”, in accordance with policies implemented at national and regional levels. This activity should be carried out within Action 3.

Therefore the objective of evaluation topic no. 5 is to investigate, whether any real transfer of lessons learned into national and regional policies took place during the respective period. Evaluation questions are divided into seven groups following the topic they focus on. These seven thematic groups, however, do not correspond with the nine thematic areas defined in the basic documents of CIP EQUAL. Table 1 presents a comparison of thematic groups specified for the purpose of evaluation and of thematic groups defined in the CIP EQUAL principles. The following table shows the assignment of individual thematic groups of CIP EQUAL to thematic groups defined for evaluation purposes. The information below shows that some thematic areas of CIP EQUAL are included in several “evaluation areas”. This is particularly the case of the tasks 5.01 and 5.02 where the factual and procedural levels of the issue are separated. On the contrary, help for asylum seekers does not occur among the evaluation themes.

Table 55: Comparison of thematic areas defined in CIP EQUAL Principles and in contracting documents within the Third Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of CIP EQUAL

Thematic groups - evaluation	Thematic areas of CIP EQUAL
Employment, social inclusion and anti-discriminatory policies – task 5.01	1st pillar: Improvement of employability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvement of access and return to the labour market for persons with integration difficulties;• Overcoming racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market; 2nd pillar: Business development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening the process of establishing
Processes of creation of public policies (particularly in relation to employment policy, social inclusion and anti-discriminatory policies) - task 5.02	
Mediation institutions on the labour market -	

¹³⁹ The chapter analyses the situation as of 31 July 2008

<p>task 5.03</p> <p>Education systems and professional preparation systems – task 5.04</p> <p>Creation of business entities – task 5.05</p> <p>Regulatory measures in the area of employment – task 5.06</p> <p>Human resources management and development policies – task 5.07</p>	<p>businesses to all, through the provision of the necessary tools to establish a business and to identify and utilise new opportunities for the development of employment in urban and rural areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing social economics (the third sector), particularly as regards community services, with particular emphasis on the improvement of the quality of work; <p>3rd pillar: Support for adaptability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for lifelong learning and procedures supporting the employment of persons endangered by discrimination and inequality in relation to the labour market; • Support for the adaptability of businesses and employees to structural changes and to the utilisation of information and other new technologies; • 4th pillar of EES: Equal opportunities for men and women: • Reconciliation of family and professional life and re-integration of men and women to the labour market, development of more flexible and effective forms of work and supporting services; • Reducing differences between the chances of men and women on the labour market; <p>Separately defined topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for asylum seekers in their integration into the labour market.
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Source: own processing

Table 56: Assignment of thematic areas defined in CIP EQUAL Principles to the thematic groups quoted in the contracting documents within the Third Phase of Ongoing Evaluation of the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL

Thematic groups - evaluation	Thematic areas of CIP EQUAL
Employment, social inclusion and anti-discriminatory policies – task 5.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of access and return to the labour market for persons with integration difficulties; • Overcoming racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market; • Reconciliation of family and professional life and re-integration of men and women to the labour market, development of more flexible and effective forms of work and supporting services; • Reducing differences between the chances of men and women on the labour market;
Processes of creation of public policies (particularly in relation to employment policy, social inclusion and anti-discriminatory policies) - task 5.02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of access and return to the labour market for persons with integration difficulties; • Overcoming racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market; • Reconciliation of family and professional life and re-integration of men and women to the labour market, development of more flexible and effective forms of work and supporting services; • Reducing differences between the chances of men and women on the labour market;
Mediation institutions on the labour market - task 5.03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of access and return to the labour market for persons with integration difficulties;
Education systems and professional preparation systems – task 5.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for lifelong learning and procedures supporting the employment of persons endangered by discrimination and inequality in relation to the labour market;
Creation of business entities – task 5.05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening the process of establishing businesses to all, through the provision of the necessary tools to establish a business and to identify and utilise new opportunities for the development of employment in urban and rural areas;
Regulatory measures in the area of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation of family and professional

employment – task 5.06	life and re-integration of men and women to the labour market, development of more flexible and effective forms of work and supporting services;
Human resources management and development policies – task 5.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the adaptability of businesses and employees to structural changes and to the utilisation of information and other new technologies;

Source: own processing

Each topic defined in the contracting documents is evaluated using the following sequence of questions:

- How far did the Programme results lead to provable changes in relevant policies?
- What are specific proofs of results at both the programme level and individual theme level?
- What is the degree of the effect of the identified changes when fighting discrimination and inequalities on the labour market?
- What is the degree of sustainability of such changes after the programme ends?

7.1.2 Methodological approach to the identification of demonstrable changes in relevant policies and analysis of their relation to CIP EQUAL

Choice of general methodical procedure is determined by the logics of the above questions. Within the search for answers for questions 1 and 2, changes in legislation were analysed, as well as the changes in strategic documents, implementing legislation and in other relevant documents. Such analyses also examine whether the changes were influenced by the outcomes of CIP EQUAL projects.

The applied approach was based on three basic steps. In the first step, it was necessary to identify those changes which could be possibly caused by the existence of CIP EQUAL. This identification took place at several qualitative levels.

- Analysis of changes in relevant laws and by-laws and in other documents during the period of implementation of CIP EQUAL. Here, individual documents (including the explanatory memoranda) were searched for explicit references to CIP EQUAL. Searching for such proofs, the so-called “hard” ones, were performed during the period October 2007 to November 2008. All the legislation (laws and by-laws) were searched during this investigation, adopted and/or amended from the beginning of operation of CIP EQUAL to the present time¹⁴⁰. Further, an analysis of relevant strategic documents related to the issue of employment and non-discrimination (e.g. operational programmes for the period of 2007-2013) was performed.

¹⁴⁰ Their list is attached in Annex.

- Asking questions. The necessity to ask questions is based on the fact that not all changes caused by the implementation of CIP EQUAL are expressly mentioned in documents. It is possible that the authors of specific policies (and/or changes within them) have been influenced by the outcomes of CIP EQUAL without mentioning it specifically in the particular document. Such information, however, could be possible to obtain based on direct interviews with the staff of relevant working places¹⁴¹. Such interviews were carried out from February 2008. Information on impacts obtained directly from individual organisations involved in CIP EQUAL were used as an additional source. Here we have used information obtained via a web questionnaire focusing on the role of development partnerships in commenting procedures; apart from that, the completed investigation by MA and our own investigation carried out in the second half of July 2008 were utilised¹⁴².
- Analysis of products developed within the frames of individual projects and comparison of their substance with changes in relevant policies.

Verification of information from individual sources formed a second step in the process of identification of impacts of CIP EQUAL. If for example development partnerships provided information on influencing a certain legislation, an analysis of such legislation was performed, together with a comparison of identified change with the substance of the product of that development partnership (or the relationship to it) and/or interviews at the level of relevant sites of public administrations were carried out.

Finally, the analysis of the relationships of the identified change and CIP EQUAL was performed as a third step. This step attempted to verify whether the respective change was only a consequence of the existence of CIP EQUAL or whether it was not e.g. discussed by expert public earlier and the influence of CIP EQUAL played just a supporting role.

Efficiency of the transfer of knowledge obtained during the CIP EQUAL project implementation into relevant public policies depends to a certain extent on how successfully such knowledge has been presented to the respective public authorities. This is applicable namely in relation to authorities responsible for creation of legislation and for regulation of system expenditure programmes. Thus the above information clearly shows that the CIP EQUAL outcomes, as they can be demonstrated by provable changes, depend on the efficiency and effectiveness of the implemented mainstreaming strategy. In case they do not work well, one cannot expect positive conclusions in this evaluation topic.

The presented form of the document presents analyses performed based on the information obtained until the end of July 2008. Specifically, an analysis of existing legislation was carried out, further the results of questionnaire investigation of development partnerships were processed, as well as results of telephone calls and e-mail interviews with the relevant sites of public authorities, results of interviews with MA concerning the impact of projects of the

¹⁴¹ Questionnaire investigation has been carried out at the following sites: MoLSA – departments belonging to Employment Services Administration; department of labour-law legislation and collective bargaining; MoEYS – Group for general, vocational and further education; Group for research and higher education; Group for social programmes in education; MIT – department of business environment; CMCTU. In some cases, however, we have not been successful in obtaining any response.

¹⁴² Questionnaires used during the investigation carried out in July 2008 are attached to the report.

1st round of CIP EQUAL and the results of own interviews on the topic of the impacts of all projects of CIP EQUAL as of 15 July 2008. When creating the final form of the report, the results of analysis of individual comments of development partnerships concerning the legislation and strategic documents were taken into account, as well as the results of an expert panel which took place on 25 June 2008.

7.1.3 Methodological framework for the analysis of effectiveness and sustainability of implemented changes and the problem of CIP EQUAL evaluation as such

Transfer of some procedures obtained within the CIP EQUAL projects into public policies does not however represent the final objective of the programme. The final objective is an effect on the labour market, particularly the elimination of any form of discrimination and inequality. Within the evaluation of impacts, this aspect is reviewed using the effectiveness criterion. The next part deals with the definition of its extent and with the methodology of evaluation.

Assessing the effectiveness of each change is quite a difficult task. Within the changes occurring in the developing labour market, one must distinguish those changes which occurred as a consequence of changes in relevant policies from the spontaneous ones. This is however very difficult in many cases, as the impact of changes in public policies is not only overlapping with spontaneous changes, but these two realms often cause synergic effects as well. For example the development of unemployment of endangered groups is influenced not only by changes in legislation but also by their position in the economic cycle.

Within the evaluation theme 5, evaluation of effectiveness is based on three steps. In the first step, changes in relevant policies made in consequence of the knowledge transfer from CIP EQUAL projects are identified. In the second step, theoretical analysis of the impact of such changes on the labour market is carried out. Such analysis is based on both economic theories and foreign experience. The last (third) step is based on monitoring selected indicators describing the situation on the labour market and on the analysis of the possible influence of implemented changes on the values of such indicators.

Apart from monitoring of the effectiveness criterion, the individual impacts are evaluated from the point of view of their sustainability. Sustainability is understood, within the evaluation, as a situation, in which no obstructions preventing the future operation of the implemented changes in the relevant policies can be identified. Sustainability may be therefore endangered either from financial or legislative reasons. Legislation barriers may occur particularly due to an inconsistency of the implemented change with future regulations and legislation of European Communities. If it is possible to assume that the evaluated change is in a potential collision with any future EC legislation, it will have to be cancelled, i.e. its non-sustainability is demonstrated. Therefore the consistency with upcoming changes in the legislation framework of the European Communities is assessed within the evaluation as well.

The above mentioned financial resources present another issue in the field of sustainability. Many changes implemented during the last period in the employment policies require additional financial coverage. With regard to difficult conditions prevailing in public

budgets we have to ask ourselves, however, whether the required resources shall be available in the future. If not, we cannot speak about sustainability at all. In this regard it is however necessary to point out that there will be significant resources allocated from the EU budget for the policies of employment, human resource development etc. until 2013¹⁴³. Therefore in assessing the sustainability of changes, which require substantial support from public budgets, these financial resources had to be taken into account too.

Apart from the assessment of effectiveness and sustainability of implemented changes, which are a result of the implementation of CIP EQUAL, it is necessary to deal with the issue of evaluation of the efficiency of CIP EQUAL as a whole. In this context it is also necessary to emphasise the fact that within CIP EQUAL, problems of efficient allocation, where the respective changes target an increase of economic efficiency¹⁴⁴, are dealt with as well as problems of redistribution, where the respective change should help selected inhabitants due to the fact that the society considers it as ethically correct. When evaluating individual measures, it is necessary to apply a different approach. While the measures targeted at an increased efficiency of allocation can utilise the cost-benefit analytical methods, in a case of redistribution measures the analysis of economy has to be sufficient¹⁴⁵. Thus in the former case, it is necessary to know all the relevant impacts and their financial valuation, and in the latter case there must be information on the existence of another tool with the same objective, so that we can assess, whether the selected measure represents the cheapest (i.e. the most economical) way.

In this regard it is necessary to point out the fact that in the current state of affairs in relation to implementation, none of the above mentioned assumptions is fulfilled and therefore we cannot make a correct overall evaluation of efficiency and/or economy of CIP EQUAL as a whole. The underlying reasons include particularly the following:

- We do not know all the impacts of the implemented changes on the target groups, because the time elapsed from the implementation is rather short. Therefore it is impossible to evaluate the efficiency of the impacts targeted at an increase of the efficiency of allocation.
- It is impossible to compare costs of implementation of individual changes in relevant policies with another instrument of a similar type, and therefore we cannot assess the economy of those impacts aiming primarily at redistribution.

As explained above, any evaluation would be clearly normative and subjective and therefore it is not carried out in this evaluation report.

¹⁴³This is particularly the case of the following programmes supported by the ESF “Operational programme Human resources and employment”, “Operational programme Prague Adaptability” and the “Operational programme Education for competitive strength”.

¹⁴⁴ It is understood as a ration of outputs and inputs.

¹⁴⁵ The terms of efficiency and economy are understood in line with the definition in Act No. 320/2001 Coll. on financial control.

7.2 Responses to individual evaluation questions

The evaluation of the impacts of CIP EQUAL available at present cannot be carried out in the present time (state as of 31 July 2008) due to the incomplete status of Action 3, which focuses particularly on the transfer of knowledge and developed products to the relevant policies. The number of identified impacts is thus very limited and in some cases they are a result of the existence of NTN.¹⁴⁶

The limited perception of real impacts of CIP EQUAL by the development partnerships can be demonstrated by currently reported values (as of 15 September 2008) of the monitoring indicators, which in most cases show zero values only. For a summary of monitoring indicators of impacts on public policies and their current values, see the table below.

Table 57: Monitoring indicators of impacts on public policies, status as of 15 September 2008

Indicator	Units	Planned status	Achieved status	Actually achieved (%)
Changes in system due to innovative products/processes	Proposed changes in legislation	10,00	0,00	0,00
Number of innovative products/processes utilised in practice	pcs	20,00	0,00	0,00

Source: MSSF Monit

In spite of the zero values presented in the set of monitoring indicators, several impacts on relevant public policies have been identified based on the research carried out. Their summary is listed below and the logic of presentation has been determined by the selected evaluation questions. Then the final chapter deals with a summarisation of the current state in the area of impacts and it proposes to carry out a change in the value of the monitoring indicator “Changes in system due to innovative products/processes” so that the actual status is depicted.

In this connection it should also be emphasised that the relevant analysis of impacts of CIP EQUAL should be performed after a longer time has elapsed. 3 years after the completion of the Action 3 seem to be an optimal period. The reason for the determination of such a temporal period is that a change of the relevant legislation requires about 1 year, another period of approx. the same length must be allowed before the change will be transferred into

¹⁴⁶ This statement is based on the evaluation of the questionnaire investigation carried out at the level of development partnerships. The investigation shows that individual partnerships obtain legislation and strategic documents often through the NTN, as their members include the representatives of public authorities. Moreover, most of changes proposed in this manner has no direct link to products developed by individual development partnerships.

a change of behaviour of relevant economic subjects. And finally another year has to be added due to fact, that a publication of more detailed statistical data by CSO is necessary for the implementation of more detailed evaluation activities.

7.2.1 Factual impacts on public policies (5.01)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in the employment, social inclusion, and anti-discrimination policies at national, regional and local levels (e.g. new target groups for existing policies, modification of existing policies, introduction of new legislation, promotion of supporting measures in specific areas)?

At the national level, only one direct impact on the employment, social inclusion, and anti-discrimination policies may be identified due to the present state of progress of CIP EQUAL. This is the case related to the transposition of experience in working with the physically disabled, which integrates the employment preparation institute for persons with physical disabilities in Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment¹⁴⁷.

For the sake of completeness we should mention that within the project “Rehabilitation – Activation – Labour”, a proposal for an amendment of Act No. 435/2004 Coll. and a methodological guide allowing for a practical fulfilment of the concept of labour rehabilitation is being prepared in co-operation with the Employment Service Administration. Due to the fact, that the final proposal has not yet been finalised at the MoLSA, the evaluation of effectiveness and sustainability cannot be performed yet.

In the case of the regional level, one impact has been identified as well. This is the case of the utilisation of experience resulting from the project CIP EQUAL¹⁴⁸ in the Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009. Specifically it regards the implementation of a measure focusing on the preparation of sight-impaired individuals for entry into the labour market.

What are specific proofs of results at both the programme level and individual theme level?

At the national level, the impacts of CIP EQUAL (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family” - change of the Act on Employment) can be demonstrated by the wording of Section 72 of the Act on Employment, No. 435/2004 Coll., which defines the concept of preparation of health-impaired people for work and at the same time it allows to carry out such preparation with the support of an assistant. Such a preparation can last 24 months at maximum. Application of this concept has been transferred to legislation based on the presentation of good results within the NTN A.

At the regional level, the impacts of CIP EQUAL (the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society” – change of the Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009) can be demonstrated by the wording of the Measure

¹⁴⁷The project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life – partnership in a family”.

¹⁴⁸Project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society”.

4.3. “Educational and rehabilitation programme for sight-impaired persons who can be placed on the free labour market” within the Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009. The aim of this measure is to support the programme focusing on persons with health (sight) disability in their productive age (the “ZTP” category) who have gone through the process of basic social rehabilitation and who have a real interest in further education with the aim to achieve professional success. Assumed costs of this measure amount to CZK 1.2 million.

What is the degree of the effect of the identified changes when fighting discrimination and inequalities on the labour market?

The impact identified at the national level (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family”. - change of the Act on Employment) focuses on help for handicapped persons when entering the labour market, by taking into account their specific needs. It can have the form of individual assistance or special courses. Generally we may expect positive impacts on the employment of such groups. The number of people in such a group is about 407 thousand persons at the national level¹⁴⁹, while only a certain part of this number can be economically active. In the respective group, however, 39 thousand persons are unemployed, i.e. the specific unemployment rate amounts to 25.5 %¹⁵⁰. This is actually five times more than the general unemployment rate (5.3 % for 2007)¹⁵¹. Thus the opportunity for improvement is quite significant here.

In case of the regional impact identified in the city of Brno (the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society” – change of the Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009) the scope of the target group is logically smaller. Based on the data presented in CSO (2008), there are approximately 1,000 sight-impaired persons aged 15-60 living in Brno. If we presume the same unemployment rate as in the other parts of the republic¹⁵² (i.e. 25.5 %), there are approximately 250 such persons who could benefit from measure 4.3.

What is the degree of sustainability of such changes after the programme ends?

Sustainability of implemented changes depends particularly on the financial possibilities of the public sector. Their financial demands are not however too intense. In case of a change in the Employment Act (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family”. - change of the Act on Employment) this sum amounts to approx. CZK 10 million per year¹⁵³, i.e. a sum representing just a very small portion of the total resources allocated for the purpose of employing people with health disabilities (approx. CZK 1.4 billion in 2006)¹⁵⁴.

¹⁴⁹ Persons with health disabilities aged from 15 to 60 years are included. CSO (2008).

¹⁵⁰ Data quoted from CSO (2008) and related to the year 2007.

¹⁵¹ Data for 2007 pursuant to the selective investigation of workforce.

¹⁵² Data covering only the city of Brno are not available.

¹⁵³ Explanatory memorandum to the Act on Employment. See <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/tiskt.sqw?O=4&CT=527&CT1=0>

¹⁵⁴ MF (2007)

In the case of the city of Brno (the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society” – change of the Social services community plan of the city of Brno valid until 2009) settlement of a part of costs from external sources is presumed (external:internal 5:6), e.g. from MoLSA and ESF. Taking into account the small amount of resources, this seems to be feasible

7.2.2 Process-Oriented Impacts on Public Policies (5.02)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in the processes of creation of public policies at the national, regional and/or local level (e.g. new coordination mechanisms in programme sections and organisation active within the given field of civic society, new monitoring and diagnostic mechanisms, etc.)?

Within this stage of evaluation of CIP EQUAL, direct impacts on the legislation area concerning the creation of public policies at national, regional and local levels have not been identified yet. We may, however, find certain impacts resulting from the establishment of national thematic networks and the partnerships within individual projects. We may particularly positively assess the fact that regular meetings of representatives of public authorities, academic sectors and NGOs are taking place. This facilitates quite an intense exchange of expert knowledge in practice, resulting in a better transferability of such expert knowledge in legislation proposals¹⁵⁵.

What are specific proofs of such results at both the programme level and individual theme level?

From the point of view of the monitored issue of influence of CIP EQUAL on the processes of creation of public policies, clear proof can be seen in the involvement of individual partners and members of national thematic networks in the commenting procedures of laws, by-laws and other relevant documents. According to the questionnaire investigation carried out, 71 % of entities participating in any CIP EQUAL project got involved in a commenting procedure concerning some document related to the employment and non-discrimination policies and a majority of them commented more than one document¹⁵⁶. From the point of view of the structure of commented documents (and/or their regional importance), the ratio of nationwide and regional texts is approximately 50:50.

How far will these changes probably result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what are their potential limitations?

¹⁵⁵ This statement is confirmed both by the development partnerships and some public authorities. It can be proved by their responses in questionnaires and telephone interviews.

¹⁵⁶ Specific evaluation of the efficiency of the commenting procedures is however complicated by the fact that most development partnerships do not file their comments. In the investigation using electronic questionnaires, 24 entities stated that they had commented a law or strategic document. However, only four of them were able to provide their comments. Thus it was not possible in most cases to compare the wording of comments with the final wording of laws or other documents. On the other hand, when interviewing staff of relevant sites, we could not identify any case (within the commenting procedures) of such proposals or comments by entities participating in CIP EQUAL that would bring new attitudes to public policies on the monitored areas at the national level.

It is possible to expect that a more intense involvement of organisations dealing with specific problems on the labour market in the formulation of public policies shall have positive impacts on the quality of the adopted legislation and strategic documents and as a consequence on the situation of the endangered groups on the labour market.

How far are these changes sustainable?

As it has been already mentioned above, the change quoted above, i.e. the involvement of a broad variety of organisations in the commenting procedures within the creation of national and regional policies, has an informal character. Its sustainability thus depends on the willingness of the respective public and local authorities to extend such co-operation. Taking into account the relatively low costs resulting from the distribution of documents for the purpose of commenting and from arranging meetings of experts within the thematic network, there should be no important obstacles, as regards the public resources. The continuing involvement of academic and non-profit entities in the articulation of public policies at the national level is supported also by the fact that the Czech government's resolution no. 420 dated 13 April 2005 defines the obligation to perform the Regulatory Impact Assessment for each proposed legislation. Such process includes a consultation phase as well, where the party presenting the proposal has an obligation to invite subjects, which are directly or indirectly affected by the document being prepared (e.g. a law) or which have certain interests regarding the issues dealt with in the presented document.

7.2.3 Institutional Impact on the Labour Market (5.03)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in the mediation institutions of the labour market and in the mediation processes (e.g. improved organisation of the labour market services, improved coordination with other entities active on the labour market, care about target groups, etc.)?

The most important change at the national level, which was carried out based i.e. on the experience gathered in the CIP EQUAL projects¹⁵⁷, was the distribution of competences in the area of supervision over the labour market between the labour offices and labour inspectorates. This solution was implemented in the form of an amendment to Act No. 251/2005 Coll., on labour inspection. At present, observation of labour-law legislation is supervised by labour offices and inspectorates, while the former focuses on the supervision of the observation of the Act on Employment (Act No. 435/2004 Coll.) and of the Act on Insolvency of the Employer (Act No. 118/2000 Coll.). On the other hand the labour inspectorates focus on inspections of the observation of legal regulation in the areas of conclusion, change and termination of employment contracts, business hours, relaxation periods, vacations, obstacles preventing work, salary or wages, refund of salary or wages, refund of travel expenses, employment of women and juveniles, observance of collective agreements and internal regulations and of-course the regulations on the occupational safety

¹⁵⁷This was the case of the project "Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family". The exchange of competences between the labour offices and labour inspectorates was, however, considered independently on CIP EQUAL. From this reason, the influence of CIP EQUAL on the change of legislation may be designated as a supporting one.

and health, including the regulations on the safe operation of reserved technical devices. Therefore on a general level, there was a shift in part of authorities and activities from the labour offices – allowing them to devote their capacity to activities related to the work with unemployed.

At the regional level it is possible to identify the benefits of CIP EQUAL¹⁵⁸ when formulating the “Programme of personnel agencies”, implemented successfully based on the Resolution of the Czech Government No. 518/2002. The aim of this programme was to mitigate the social impacts of restructuring the steel industry in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The basic attitude, taken over from the implementation of the CIP EQUAL Restart, resulted from the effort to provide unemployed workers individual services as soon as possible, allowing them to psychically withstand their stressing situation, to orient himself/herself on the labour market, to acquire new skills using retraining programmes and thus to increase the chance of gaining new employments, to help them in their search for employment and in starting a business, to facilitate their registration in labour offices and to co-operate further in searching for a new employment even after leaving the company.

What are specific proofs of such results at both the programme level and individual theme level?

As proof of implemented changes (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family” – exchange of competences between the labour offices and labour inspectorates) at the national level, in the area of mediating institutions, we may quote the present wording of Acts No. 251/2005 Coll., on Labour Inspection, and the Act on Employment, No. 435/2004 Coll., which define the competences of regional labour inspectorates and labour offices.

Specific proofs of the impact of CIP EQUAL (the project “Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring - programme of personnel agencies”) in the area of mediating agencies at the regional level may be demonstrated on the wording of the Programme of personnel agencies adopted by government resolution no. 518/2002. The main result was the establishment of the Regional employees’ agency in the Moravian-Silesian Region, which represented i.e. a co-ordination unit for all entities capable of influencing the situation on the labour market. The Regional personnel agency also dealt with counselling and educational services for staff of company personnel agencies based on the results of CIP EQUAL (in those company departments, which are dealing with the issue of dismissing and retraining employees).

How far will these changes probably result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what are their potential limitations?

The distribution of competences among the regional labour inspectorates and the labour offices in the supervision of the observance of relevant regulation (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family” – exchange of competences between the labour offices and labour inspectorates) may generally contribute to a better enforceability of a law. This is due to a more narrow specialisation. On the other

¹⁵⁸The project “Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring”.

hand, the loss of synergic effects may have an opposite impact. The results can be therefore unclear and it is not possible to evaluate them based on the current data sources.

The effects of the concept of personnel agencies may be evaluated in a more specific manner. It was adopted during the restructuring of the steel industry in the Moravian-Silesian Region (the project “Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring” – programme of personnel agencies). Although the unemployment rate decreased significantly during the period of 2003-2008 (e.g. in Karviná district it dropped from 20 % to 13.4 %, in the district Ostrava-City from 17 % to 9.3 %), it cannot be considered as an outcome of the utilisation of personnel agencies. The main factor is the relatively stable economic growth which induces a generation of sufficient demand on the workforce. The application of other instruments for the mitigation of social impacts from the restructuring of the steel industry also belong among the reasons. In this regard, the Supreme Audit Office states in its audit statement 04/31 that of all the implemented instruments, only one played a significant role – it was the financial contribution paid to approx. 5,700 employees dismissed due to the organisational changes. Only an insignificant number of dismissed employees participated in other programmes (including the utilisation of services of mediating agencies). Thus, according to the SAO, it did not have any major influence on the development of the unemployment rate

The conclusions of the SAO are supported by available statistical data too. In the period from 2002 to the first half of 2004, the system of regional personnel agencies registered 3,694 clients, out of which 729 found new employment¹⁵⁹. Thus during the monitored period, 1,500 clients utilised the services of agencies per year on average, i.e. less than 1.5 % of the unemployed in the Moravian-Silesian Region.¹⁶⁰ The number of placed employment-seekers, i.e. 290 persons per year, could not contribute to the reduction of the unemployment rate in the region as well.

Based on the above example it is apparent that the concept of regionally based mediation agencies has no significant effect, although its benefit for particular individuals cannot be underestimated. Problematic regions undergoing restructuring are not characterised by the non-compatible supply and demand on the labour market (where such an activity of mediating agencies would be a solution), but by insufficient demand. Such a situation, however, can be tackled by paying subsidies (financial contributions) to the employers, resulting in the decrease of the relative price of the work and the increase of demand, or by attracting new investors.¹⁶¹

How far are these changes sustainable?

Changes implemented in the institutional settings of the inspecting institutions operating on the labour market (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family” – exchange of competences between the labour offices and labour inspectorates) by establishing the labour inspectorates and by assigning a part of competences of labour offices to them, does not present any significant burden for public budgets. And due to the fact, that at the same time the State Office for the Occupational

¹⁵⁹ RPIC-VIP (2004)

¹⁶⁰ CSO (2007)

¹⁶¹ This statement may be demonstrated by the fact that the unemployment rate started to decrease in the Moravian-Silesian region as late as in 2005, when the economic growth exceeded 5 %.

Safety is dissolved, the overall effect on public budgets is zero. As regards the European Communities legislation, no obstacle in further continuation of this institutional setting can be identified. Thus we may conclude it is sustainable.

On the other hand, the concept of personnel agencies (the project “Programme for integrating steel industry workers dismissed during restructuring” – programme of personnel agencies) supported by public resources as a tool for tackling the situation on the labour market in problematic regions, a certain diversion can be detected during recent years. This may be considered as rational, due to a significant change on the labour market and to better effects resulting from other instruments. The meaningfulness of the concept of personnel agencies can be therefore possibly found out only in regions where the supply and demand are incompatible.

7.2.4 Institutional Impact on Education and Professional Preparation (5.04)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in educational systems and professional preparation systems (e.g. new officially recognised qualifications and syllabi, new officially recognised attitudes to education)?

Within the CIP EQUAL in the CR, one realised impact and one potential impact on the existing legislation were identified at the national level. In the former case, it is the increase of emphasis on the concept of career counselling for persons with health disabilities in the system of special schools and counselling facilities. Specifically, this is the transfer of experience using this concept in the Institute for physically handicapped youth Kociánka¹⁶².

In the latter case, it is a proposal of amendment to the law on social services and related regulations. Based on the experience gathered during the implementation of the training course “Manager in Social Services” arranged within the project “Development of social services”, the aim is a significant extension of the offered education for workers in the area. Generally, courses for managers in the social area are not available, as well as short-term accredited courses perfecting professional skills and knowledge of individual staff-members in individual positions, so that the philosophy of lifelong learning in this area can be fulfilled.

What are specific proofs of such results at both the programme level and individual theme level?

The above changes in career counselling (the project “Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged on the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation” – concept of career counselling) may be proved using the current wording of Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education and the related decrees (particularly No. 72/2005 Coll.). The content of professional and career counselling is to provide guidance in orientation on the labour market, to assist in detecting professional prerequisites and in the development of career potential with regard to ideas

¹⁶²The Project “Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged on the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation”.

concerning own self-realisation. The general objective is to increase the usability of each individual on the labour market.

In case of the proposed changes within the Act on Social Services, this may be proved particularly through the course “Manager in social area” (the project “Development of social services”). After the completion of the project, it will be utilised by the University in Hradec Králové. Information obtained from one of its graduates has been used for the preparation of the documentation of the proposed change in the law.

How far will these changes probably result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what are their potential limitations?

The concept of career counselling (the project “Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged on the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation” concept of career counselling) may be generally considered as an efficient instrument for reconciling prerequisites and capabilities of a graduate with the educational system and requirements of the labour market. Evaluation of its efficiency is, however, difficult due to the short period of time since its implementation.

Further education in the area of management of social services (the project “Development of social services”) may be generally considered as beneficial, particularly in relation to the character of this sector characterised by its high demands concerning the human resources. Quantitative evaluation of real impact can be possible only after the implementation of the proposed change. It will however be necessary to carry out the collection of primary data from individual graduates.

How far are these changes sustainable?

The application of the concept of career counselling (the project “Integrated consulting for individuals disadvantaged on the labour market in the context of national and European co-operation” – concept of career counselling) is dependent on existing resources to a large extent. Most ongoing activities in this area are at present implemented with the support of ESF funds. The question of sustainability shall therefore effectively manifest itself only after the end the current program period.

In case of the provision of courses with the thematic focus “Manager of social services” (the project “Development of social services”), the continuation of the course is ensured – it will be taught at the University in Hradec Králové.

7.2.5 Institutional Impacts in the Area of Business Creation (5.05)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in the structures, processes and measures aimed at supporting the creation of entrepreneurial entities (e.g. new sustainable mechanisms of support for entrepreneurs not supported before)?

No direct impacts have been identified in this area so far. The application of the concept of social business can be considered as a potential future impact. Documentation for a prospective change of the legislation was prepared by the DP in the project “Employment and educational programme for clients of the Halfway House in Velký Dvůr near

Pohořelice” within the activities of the NTN C. But the complete legislation proposal has not been prepared so far.

Moreover we can presume certain future impacts resulting from practical utilisation of products focusing on methodological support for establishing new companies by endangered groups. They particularly include the courses for entrepreneurial beginners implemented within the project “Merkur” and the guideline for establishing a social co-operative prepared within the project “Social Co-Operatives and Businesses”.

What are specific proofs of such results at both the programme level and individual theme level?

No such proofs have been identified so far.

How far will these changes probably result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what are their potential limitations?

Products under preparation belonging to this area focus in majority on cases for the improvement of the starting position of endangered groups when starting a business. The problem of all these products, however, consists in that they do not resolve the issue of systemic obstacles limiting the creation of business entities in the CR. The implemented studies¹⁶³, as well as the indicators presented by the World Bank¹⁶⁴ show that the whole system of regulation concerning the possibilities of starting a business in the CR is very rigid. That means that the application of specific tools focusing on endangered groups should be preceded by a general change of the regulation, with the effect of a decrease of transactional expenses related to the establishment and operation of a company.

How far are these changes sustainable?

Cannot be assessed.

7.2.6 Institutional Impact on the Regulatory Framework (5.06)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in regulatory employment measures (e.g. new regulations on collective agreements or laws)?

No direct impacts can be identified in the area of regulation framework so far. One potential impact could be the introduction of the concept of “paternal leave”, where the necessary documentation has been prepared based on the investigation within the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society”. At present, the MoLSA has inserted this concept into its “National concept of the support of families with children”.

¹⁶³ Potluka et al. (2008)

¹⁶⁴ WB (2007)

What are specific proofs of such results at both the programme level and individual theme level?

A specific proof of impact of the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society” is the current wording of the “National concept of the support of families with children” which shall be discussed in the Government and which includes the concept of one-week parental leave covered by the system of sickness insurance.

How far will these changes probably result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what are their potential limitations?

We cannot expect that the introduction of the concept of parental leave (the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society”) will have any direct impacts on the labour market. In the long term, however, it can induce a change in the traditional division of the roles of women and men in a family and it can contribute to a better co-ordination of the needs of labour market and family, in the case of women.

How far are these changes sustainable in time?

The presumed financial requirements for the implementation of such family leave (the project “The role of equal opportunities in the prosperity of the society”) amounts to CZK 400 million per year¹⁶⁵ covered by the system of sickness insurance. This amount does not represent a significant burden from the point of view of sickness insurance (approx. CZK 33 billion). Therefore a long-term sustainability of the proposed concept of paternal leave may be expected.

7.2.7 Organisational Impact on the Employer (5.07)

How far do the programme results lead to provable changes in the HR management and development policies including employee recruitment, remuneration charts, approach to training and professional growth, as well as employment types?

The Labour Code is the legislation which has a dominant influence on employers, as regards the possibilities to flexibly organise relationships with employees. On 1 January 2007 its new version came into effect (Act No. 262/2006 Coll.), where we can identify an implementation of one element resulting from CIP EQUAL¹⁶⁶. Specifically, this is support for the introduction of the so-called teleworking, which can be generally understood as “working from home”. The Labour Code in effect allows such modification.

Apart from the Labour Code, the resulting form of the relationship of the employer and employee is conditioned by the tax legislation. Within the amendment of Income Tax Act (no. 545/2005 Coll.), the option to deduct the cost of transport of employees to the place of

¹⁶⁵ The minister of labour and social affairs commented the issue in Lidové noviny on 23 November 2007. See http://www.lidovsky.cz/otcovska-dovolena-muze-byt-uz-za-rok-dvq-/ln_noviny.asp?c=A071123_000025_ln_noviny_sko&klic=222574&mes=071123_0

¹⁶⁶ The project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family”.

employment, if arranged by the employer using his own or contracted transport means – this is the consequence of the proposals of the implementers of the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life partnership in a family”.

How far do these changes influence the structure of individual job types and approaches of various groups to the same?

Labour Code (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life – partnership in a family”): Due to a relatively short period of time (approx. 1 year), during which the concept of work from home can be used, it is not possible at the moment to evaluate specific impacts on the individual endangered groups.

Income Tax Act (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family”): Due to a relatively short period of time (approx. 1 year), during which the costs of transport of own employees can be considered as tax-deductible, it is not possible at the moment to evaluate specific impacts on individual endangered groups.

What role did the programme results play in the changes in anti-discrimination policies and their monitoring? What are specific proofs of such results at both the overall programme level and individual theme level?

This cannot be evaluated on the basis of existing data.

How far will these changes probably result in a change when combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market and what are their potential limitations?

The application of the concept of work from home (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family”– introduction of teleworking) represents a very flexible form of organisation of work. At the same time it presents a possibility how to mitigate the disadvantage of certain groups of people on the labour market. First of all this is the case of mothers with small children, who can use this method to combine professional and family tasks. On the other hand, this solution is suitable only for those who have sufficient knowledge in the area of IT. This can be identified as the main limitation of the implemented change.

In a longer term, one can expect an increase in the number of workers utilising the concept of work from home. According to the research carried out by Taylor Nelson Sofres Faktum, approx. one third of inhabitants of the Czech Republic partially or wholly prefers to work from home¹⁶⁷. Problems are however perceived in the attitude of employers, who have doubts about the performance and motivation of such employees, and in the absence of the necessary technical equipment.

The foreign experience in EU Member States has shown so far that the concept of work from home is utilised by “normal” participants on the labour market and that women with children utilise it to a very limited extent only. This system is utilised by approx. 9 million

¹⁶⁷ Šindlerová (2006)

employees in total, but in most cases they are men from 25 to 54 years of age, with a management or technical job¹⁶⁸.

Generally, however, the implementation of the concept of work from home increases the flexibility on the labour market (as it can be demonstrated e.g. by the values of indicators of the rigidity of legislation presented for instance by the World Bank¹⁶⁹, and it must be seen as a positive aspect.

How far are these changes sustainable in time?

Labour Code (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life – partnership in a family”): Implementation of the concept of work from home does not imply any requirements on the resources from public budgets and it is not in contradiction with any legislation of the European Communities. Thus from this perspective, we cannot identify any obstacles preventing its sustainability. Its successful operation is however conditioned by a sufficient level of the necessary communication infrastructure (particularly coverage of the internet connection).

Income Tax Act (the project “Conditions for bringing career life into harmony with family life –partnership in a family”): The option to decrease the tax base by the costs of transport of employees to their place of employment using own or contracted means of transport, does not present any significant requirement as far as the public budgets are concerned. When adopting the amendment to the Income Tax Act, which introduced this change, the specific impact on public budgets (in the sense of unrealised tax income) has not been expressly disclosed, as it is insignificant. It may be estimated in the amount of several tens of million CZK. Thus it does not present a problem from the point of view of sustainability of public finances.

A long-term existence of this provision depends however on the concept of the changes in tax acts which are under preparation. If the principles expressed by the current government should be really followed (simplification of taxes in the sense of reduction of exceptions), leading to a wider tax base and decrease of the statutory tax rate, we may expect that a discussion on the elimination of this provision will take place.

7.2.8 Other impacts – not classified

Apart from the impacts described above, we may present other ones as well, which cannot be allocated to any of the areas specified in the contracting documents. The first of them is the introduction of insurance coverage of the mobile palliative care (Act No. 48/1997 Coll., on the Public Health Insurance)¹⁷⁰. This step has opened a path for negotiations concerning the definition of the care provided by mobile hospices, both with the Ministry of Health and

¹⁶⁸ “Teleworking – pracujte doma!” (“Teleworking – work from home!”), article published on the server <http://www.pripojtese.cz>. It is available at the following address: http://www.pripojtese.cz/art_doc-1AA2FFAF7F7724CEC12571F8002EBE44.html

¹⁶⁹ See the system of indicators used by the World Bank “Employing Workers”. See <http://www.doingbusiness.org/ExploreTopics/EmployingWorkers/>

¹⁷⁰ Implemented within the frames of the project “It is normal to die at home”.

health insurance providers. Two proposals on the change of the Act on Social Service (No. 108/2006 Coll.) have been presented in relation to this issue, aiming at a better precision of the definition of ambulant and field type of hospices. In case of these changes we cannot expect any impacts on the labour market.

Another impact which cannot be classified in any of the above mentioned categories, is the influence on the form of operational programmes for the 2007-2013 period. In case of the OP HRE, the individual axes focus i.e. on supporting the fulfilment of partnership principles, international co-operation and innovation, which can be identified as a result of the transfer of knowledge from CIP EQUAL. The OPPA attempts at responding to problems related to the fulfilment of the mainstreaming principle by supporting the creation of networks including the key institutions linked to the OPP HRE.

7.3 The Thematic Area of Impacts - A Conclusion

As mentioned above, the evaluation of impacts of CIP EQUAL on public policies in relevant areas is limited by the fact that Action 3 has not yet been completed. Therefore the number of impacts identified is relatively small. Their total summary is listed in the following tables. Information on the measures, within which the individual projects obtain support, are included as well.

Until the end of July 2008, 11 impacts of the projects supported within CIP EQUAL on six relevant public policy areas have been identified. No impact has been determined only in the case of Task 5.02 Process-Oriented Public Policy Impact. In one case, however, the effect of CIP EQUAL may be only considered as supportive because the subject change was discussed regardless of the existence of CIP EQUAL, and it concerned distribution of competences among employment bureaus and labour inspectorates. Some of the impacts have not yet acquired the form of a specific legislation change. They mainly concern the establishment and the functioning of a social enterprise and the introduction of the paternity leave. It is therefore possible to state that CIP EQUAL has brought eight “full-value” impacts on the public policy area so far. It is also possible to change the value of the monitored impact indicator “Changes of system due to innovative products/processes” to the same extent.

Based on the completed analysis, the following conclusions may be formulated:

- A majority of the implemented changes are of a partial nature and they cannot influence the overall situation on the labour market. Positive impacts, however, may be also expected with certain specific groups: in the case of persons with a reduced working capacity, this chiefly includes considering their individual needs in the educational system (career consulting) and in their working life (employment preparation institute), and introducing tax eligibility of transportation costs with employers in the case of persons travelling to work.
- Only a part of the identified impacts constitutes the transfer of a developed product to public policies. The remaining part was the result of objection procedures or in the course of NTN work.

- With a view to the inadequate time interval, an assessment of the efficiency of the implemented changes to relevant policies may be made only at a general level.
- Most of the implemented changes are sustainable as they do not present a problem either in the legal or fiscal areas.

Based on the completed analyses, the following recommendations may be formulated:

- An evaluation of the impacts of programmes sharing the same philosophy with CIP EQUAL should be performed at a substantially longer time interval. An interval of 3 years from the termination of Action 3 is recommended.¹⁷¹
- While working with individual products, it is necessary to continuously monitor two groups of individuals from the same target group. The developed product/tool shall be applied to one group and not to the other. Subsequently, the impacts of the subject tool may be compared and the “base line scenario” may thus be eliminated. An evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed measures shall be significantly more objective. This procedure should become the preconditions for a successful validation procedure.
- When similar programmes are conceived in the future, their narrower focus is advisable. When looking at the thematic focus of individual projects and the individual impacts, the wide spread scope of CIP EQUAL will undoubtedly stand out. This will simplify expert monitoring of individual outputs, as well as subsequent impact evaluations.

¹⁷¹ Many representatives of development partnerships commented the possibilities of evaluation of impact before completing Action 3 in a very sceptical manner. In this case, a much longer time period would be considered as rational.

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