

Equal Community Initiative
The Agender Development Partnership:
Theme 'H' Gender Equalities
Transnationality 2005-2007

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report charts the journey of the **Wings** Transnational Partnership (TP), from the partner selection process to the outcomes of the transnational partnership.

The **WINGS**, (**Working Integration for Non-Gender Segregation**) is composed of the following four Development Partnerships.

- **Agender, Birmingham, UK**
Aim: to help local women and young females aspire to higher level careers and those not traditionally associated with women's employment.
- **Igualem, Barcelona, Spain**
Aim: to engage women in traditionally male sectors such as plumbing and construction work.
- **ChanZE, Ruhr Region, Germany**
Aim: to focus on women returning to work and the New Chemicals industry (Emscher-Lippe-Region) in particular.
- **Tramas, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy**
Aim: to encourage women to return to work by revitalising some traditional industries such as pottery, and also to encourage women to set up their own businesses.

2. INTRODUCTION: EQUAL

EQUAL is part of the European Union's strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring that no-one is denied access to them. Funded by the European Social Fund, this initiative has been testing new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job through transnational co-operation since 2001. It has a total budget of £240 million for the period 2001-2008 and funds DPs at an intervention rate of 50%. Equal is delivered through the following actions:

Action 1 - Development phase

Action 2 – Delivery of activity phase

Action 3 - Dissemination and Mainstreaming phase.

There are 8 themes in Equal. **Theme H: Gender Equalities** - is the focus of this report. The rationale behind Theme H was to develop an integrated approach to the multifaceted problems of gender segregation in the European labour market. This gave DP **Agender** the opportunity to enhance existing partnerships in exploring the issues around the engagement and participation of women in non-traditional employment sectors and to challenge traditional stereotypes in Birmingham.

The DP aimed to:

- Promote positive images of people in non-gender stereotyped jobs
- Improve direct services to women
- Support women into non-traditional job roles
- Develop new routes into careers using learning and qualifications

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- Identify with employers/intermediaries to identify where women are under-represented in the workplace and developing new positive action strategies
- Develop support centres that combine family support, (childcare, child and adult health services, social service support, etc) with advice about jobs/career delivered by advisors who are particularly expert in higher level jobs/non-traditional careers

3. THE ROLE OF BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

From the outset, Birmingham City Council was instrumental in building a co-ordinated approach for Birmingham in bidding for Equal projects. Birmingham and Solihull's Sub Regional Group (SRG), the group responsible for prioritising EU funding for Birmingham and Solihull, approached Senior European Officer, Lloyd Broad with a view to exploring the most effective way of bidding into the Equal fund. The Birmingham and Solihull Strategic Partnership's (BSSP) vast range of experience and expertise in this field, informed the decision on how to maximise the West Midlands' potential for winning successful bids. The BSSP encompasses Business Link, Birmingham City Council, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Job Centre Plus, Higher Education Institutes, Further Education and the voluntary sector. The partnership's vast range of experience and expertise in this field informed the decision on how to maximise the West Midlands' potential for winning successful bids. As well as being a catalyst, the strategic partnership provided co-ordination and facilitation, as well as lending its expertise in EU funding and transnational working.

The SRG members agreed to submit one bid per theme to boost their chances of winning the bid. The strategy worked and Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council secured funding for four separate projects in themes E (Lifelong Learning), F (Adaptability of Firms and Employees), H (Gender Equality) and I (Asylum Seekers).

BCC's international Division was then approached by Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council to manage the transnational element of all four projects. The rationale behind this stemmed from the division's extensive involvement in developing transnational partnerships, including two in round one of Equal in the themes of workplace adaptability and employability.

4. THE TRANSNATIONAL PARTNER SELECTION PROCESS

A key element in securing the success of any transnational work lies in the careful selection of partners. Birmingham City Council's identification of suitable transnational partners was a carefully managed process. Potential partners were contacted through a variety of means including:

- Europa Equal Common Database – housing all transnational project descriptions.
- Contacting potential project partners by phone/email to ascertain whether they had already joined a partnership or not.

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- Partenariat day organised in Brussels on 19.01.05 which targeted Brussels based regional and city offices and other interested DPs.
- Existing EU links – contacting former transnational partners and exploring the Eurocities network.

Suitable project partners were then selected using the following criterion:

- A) **Synergy of transnational project aims and objectives**, with those of the local project. **Agender** wanted a balanced representation from across the enlarged EU to ensure a diverse pool of experience from which to draw comparisons and to contrast approaches to the issues of gender inequality. The DP was keen to include both a southern European country, where greater emphasis is placed on the role of women within the family, and a central or northern European country where greater support is offered to women wishing to combine both career and family. **Agender** wished to work with projects having a similar vision of areas for potential transnational exchange.
- B) **Flexibility of budget**. Partners with budgets of a similar size to that of Agender were selected to ensure that an effective programme of transnational cooperation could be delivered. There was also a desire for partners who were selected to be innovative and flexible with the use of their budget. **Agender** wanted partners prepared to engage in joint working activities and thus add value to domestic activities. The principle of reciprocity underpins the Equal programme and where partners were unable to match the amount of financial investment, in-kind contributions were permitted.
- C) **City size and demographic profile**. The international division sought to engage with projects from cities of comparable size and/ or demographic profile to Birmingham. The potential for effective co-operation is enhanced if partner countries share a similar demographic profile and face similar challenges. By choosing similar social and economic contexts the partnership hoped to identify similar aims and interests as well as having target groups with similar problems. **DP Agender** chose to work with the following countries:
 - **Spain** (DP Igualem)
 - **Germany, Ruhr Region**, (DP Chance)
 - **Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy**, (DP Tramas)
- D) **Key stakeholders**. Consideration was given to the types of organisations delivering the local and transnational project. **Agender** was keen to work with projects involving voluntary organisations, local authorities and organisations with government links.
- E) **Target groups**. **Agender** targeted women and men in non-stereotyped jobs, BME groups, unemployed people and lone parents and women returning to work.

5) DRAWING UP THE TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT (TCA)

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The Transnational Co-operation Agreement is a document setting out the aims, objectives, budget and delivery methods of every project as agreed on by the partners. As soon as the partners had been selected the transnational partners met to develop the TCA. The TCA secretariat is decided on a rotating basis. Each DP becomes secretariat when hosting the TMG and the TW and is responsible for:

- the flow of information among the partners
- being the point of contact for the European Commission
- maintaining the ETCIM (an internet based tool designed to help users input, modify, validate and submit their TCAs.)

Once the TW has taken place the co-ordination secretariat's role comes to an end.

As soon as the partners had been selected, the transnational partners met to develop the Transnational Cooperation Agreement (TCA). The TCA aimed to explore the following:

1. A comparative study to develop criteria, indicators and tables to measure gender inequality
2. Using the partnership to improve the participation of women in employment sectors where other funding and programmes have failed
3. Ways of developing more innovative ways of engaging and supporting women, fully recognising and overcoming the barriers and discrimination they face.
4. Ways of developing a more innovative approach to mainstreaming and disseminating good practice.

Agender, in common with its partners, was committed to testing and embedding new approaches relating to the EQUAL leading principles of Employability, Equal Opportunities, Innovation, Partnership, Transnationality and Mainstreaming. English was agreed upon as the working language.

Common interests between members were identified and included:

- A. **Research** – gender inequality and employment
- B. The **changing** of the **structural/economic base** in regions (i.e. the decline of some sectors and growth of new sectors)
- C. Women into **non-traditional employment**, e.g. self-employment
- D. **Methods of engagement** - outreach and how to engage women
- E. **Training** (incl. personal development) and qualifications
- F. Working with employers (outreach) including **Corporate Social Responsibility** and diversity within the workplace
- G. Orientation/Information, advice and guidance (incl. individual assessments);
- H. **Gender planning tool**, e.g.
 - In Germany - linked to clusters
 - In England – linked to brokering supply and demand
 - In Catalonia – linked to the local communities through the participation of all stakeholders in the Tables for Equality
- I. Testing existing and/or developing **new tool kits** for the promotion of women in the labour market

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- J. Preparing a **mainstreaming and dissemination strategy** whereby the benefits and impact of the transnational co-operation is visible and more easily disseminated

The target group included local women and young females, inactive and unemployed women and men with little or no education, unemployed women over 30 with dependants, women over 45, immigrant women, female entrepreneurs, men moving into childcare and health care occupations.

TCA OBJECTIVES

1. To undertake comparative study/research into gender inequality in the labour market among four countries.
2. To develop criteria, indicators and tables to measure gender inequality
3. Encouraging women into non-traditional sectors of employment
4. To compare each DP's design and development of its own gender planning tools.
5. To examine the methods used by each DP to engage women and employers.
6. To make a comparison of direct services and support available to women.
7. To examine how each partnership works with employers to improve gender policies in the workplace.
8. To develop a more innovative approach to mainstreaming and dissemination good practice.
9. To engage in a broad set of transnational activities which can both add significant value to local DP activities and also share and develop new thinking and approaches to common problems.

Agreed outputs

- A) Support transnational workshops with the aim of partners working together on agreed themes.
- B) Facilitate joint working through piloting, testing, work shadowing, and the joint development of new activities.
- C) Develop a comparative report examining partner countries legal, social and social-psychological frameworks.
- D) Develop indicators that measure the 'distance travelled' of a beneficiary.
- E) Prepare a mainstreaming and dissemination strategy whereby the benefits and impact of the transnational cooperation is visible and more easily disseminated.
- F) Examine and test more innovative ways of engaging and integrating newcomers through techniques such as theatre, film, art and music.

The partners agreed transnationality would be a managed process, cooperation being delivered through:

- Transnational Management Group
- Transnational Workshops
- Study Visits

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The TCA also committed itself to undertaking:

- Joint development
- Research
- Indicator development
- Mainstreaming and dissemination strategy

The joint development budget was a crucial component of the cooperation agreement, as it generated the most opportunity for partners to work creatively together through testing, piloting, shadowing or exchanges.

6. THE TRANSNATIONAL MANAGEMENT GROUP (TMG)

TMGs are composed primarily of the transnational managers from each of the partner countries. It is here that all key decisions are agreed and elements of transnationality are managed and co-ordinated.

Its function was to:

- Monitor the progress of the TCA.
- Verify the agreements made at the Transnational Workshops.
- Prepare, shape and provide feedback on study visits.
- Agree how the principles of reciprocity could be ensured.
- Act as a vehicle of communication between the local DPs in each country and provide updates on each DP's progress.
- Provide a secretariat role to ensure the flow of communication between TMGs.

The initial TMG reached agreement on the thematic foci of the workshops and decided the cost sharing arrangements. Subsequent TMGs were held after TWs had taken place to ensure each country was clear about its commitments.

It was agreed that the TMG would meet 4 times during the life of the project and that each TMG was to be a 1 day meeting (1 day, 2 nights). Each DP would host a MNG shortly before a Transnational Workshop (TW). It should be noted that at the TMG held in September 2005, Italy announced that it was unable to send participants to all study visits.

Functions of the TMG:

- Management and co-ordination of transnational activities
- Planning up and coming workshops
- Management and maintenance of the ETCIM
- Securing communication between partners via email and official attendance at local DP meetings, together with the realisation of the work plan
- Each partner hosting is responsible for
 - Preparing and organising the meeting
 - Compiling the report to minute and communicate key decisions.

7. COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIPS (incl. website)

Transnationality was embedded at local partnership level in a number of ways including:

- Transnational Manager attended the local project Steering Group and "Family Meeting". The Family meeting comprised all key partners from all

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four Equal projects. Transnationality was a standard agenda item at these meetings.

- **Agender** members were actively encouraged to get involved in transnationality and attend the Transnational Working Group, (see section 8).
- A website housing all transnational documents providing freedom of access for all TP/DP members to transnational documentation.
- Transnational participation at Mainstreaming Events including: a transnational workshop at the "You Can Too" conference, March 2007; two transnational events in Brussels, hosted by West Midlands in Europe in June 2007 and November 2007 respectively and the presentation of key transnational outcomes at the "Moving Forwards" conference.

8. TRANSNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

The Transnational Working Group (TWG) was established in Birmingham for all local partners in order to facilitate a 'bottom-up' approach to transnational working. The TWG is intended as a management tool where local partners could attend meetings on a monthly or ad-hoc basis to:

- Facilitate partnership ownership and a participative approach to transnational working
- Maintaining communication between local and transnational partners
- Discuss workshop progress
- Agree investment level for transnational products and outcomes
- Manage and monitor TW action plans
- Communicating TMG decisions
- Providing TMG feedback
- Aid in the selection of participants for study visits and workshops
- Assist in the preparation of workshops in study visits
- Planning and debriefing for SVs and TWs.

9. STUDY VISITS

Study visits were the opportunity for project practitioners to learn about another country's project at first hand. Practitioners had the chance to meet and learn from their counterparts in other countries as well as sharing information and resources. Study visits were the opportunity for project practitioners to learn about another country's project at first hand. All DP members were invited to partake in SVs abroad, and the transnational team helped arrange visas where travel was difficult for participants. We sought to ensure equality of opportunity throughout the whole process by selecting SV participants from a wide range of organisations including: Voluntary Organisations, Universities, Learning and Skills Council, Arts Organisations, Colleges and Birmingham City Council. Approximately 10 people took part in each visit, accompanied by one European Project Officer from Birmingham City Council. Practitioners had the chance to meet and learn from their counterparts in other countries as well as sharing information and resources.

Agender visited a range of organisations abroad including: training centres for women, female led enterprises, regional work agencies and centres offering counselling, information and training.

Participants spent two days visiting individual projects and speaking to project deliverers. They were asked to maintain a critical eye and analyse the services they observed, as well as looking for opportunities for joint working that could enhance and add value to what was being done at a local level.

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These were set up with the aim of extending this opportunity to as many DP members from as many pertinent to EQUAL. Study visits took a variety of forms, including bilateral and multi-lateral visits. Some TPs were unable to go on all SVs due to financial constraints.

Participants were briefed on the study visit prior to departure and were asked to keep a record of observation whilst there. They were also required to write a report on return which described the visit and documented lessons learnt and opportunities for joint development. The contents of all the reports were then collated into a shared report by the Development Project Manager. All study visits reports can be found on the following website – www.equal-esf.com. These reports were not only a record of the feedback received from transnational partners, but were also crucial to feeding into the policy reports commissioned from INLOGOV at Birmingham University. (See: Wings Final Report). Up to 12 participants took part in each SV and the host was responsible for providing language support, if necessary, as well as compiling an overall report of the visit.

Agender made the following overseas visits:

- Barcelona, October 2005,
- The Ruhr, November 2006,
- Sardinia July 2007.

Agender also arranged an incoming study visits for all three overseas partners which took place in Birmingham in June 2006. The Birmingham programme comprised visits to

- Jericho Community Business, Balsall Heath – registered charity
- Birmingham Settlement and Centre for the Family, Aston
- Doddington Grove Children's Centre, Bartley Green
- Pertemps Employment Alliance, Newtown
- The Childcare Information Bureau, Central Library, City Centre
- BBC, Mailbox
- 'Surestart', Saltley and Ward End Children Centres
- 'Pathways Project,' Chelmsley Wood

All visits were supported by background information on Birmingham's demography, economy, skills/education offer and **Agender** project overview.

Purpose of study visits

- Look for joint development opportunities or further investigation into projects
- To get ideas and trial them in local projects
- Obtain a deeper understanding of what each project hoped to do in its locality
- Opportunity to network and gain further local understanding
- Consolidate relationships and opportunity to further discuss work being done in workshops

10. TRANSNATIONAL WORKSHOPS (TWS)

THEME

- **Comparative studies/research**
- **Women into non-traditional employment**
- **Working with Employers**

CHAIR

Germany
UK
Spain

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• **Direct Services Provision**

Italy

The workshops were thematically focused and linked to the common objectives of the transnational partnership. There were four rounds of workshops, each round was hosted by a different country which was responsible for its preparation and organisation, as well as compiling a report to contribute to the mainstreaming and dissemination. Participants were drawn from a variety of fields.

Workshop 1, Birmingham, October 2005

The first workshop gave participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. The UK, Spain and Germany gave a presentation of their DP research activities which included information regarding national context, objectives and activities. Common research interest, tools methods and possibilities for co-operation was also discussed which helped to ensure that the group had complete understanding of all countries' priorities. Four areas were identified for joint working and a plan of action was agreed.

Workshop 2, The Ruhr, April 2006

Each DP gave a short update on the advancement of the advancement of national projects in the respective countries. Information was exchanged amongst participants regarding further descriptions of the services listed by each DP and common threads of work were identified. The group also developed a common scheme for analysing and describing good practice in services in the countries involved, as well as discussing actions and milestones to be achieved by the end of the project in June 2007.

Workshop 3, Milan, September 2006

This workshop focused on developing an action plan for each transnational product, activities to be undertaken, agreeing a clear timetable, and outputs to be achieved. Each of the four working groups identified common transnational tools to be produced by June 2007. (see point 10).

Workshop 4, Barcelona, April 2007

This provided participants with a final opportunity to discuss and refine both products and outcomes. Workshops identified how to mainstream and disseminate these at both local and transnational level.

11. PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES

The TP produced the following:

1. Online Living Library on gender issues – a virtual website where non-published research on gender issues will be hosted.

Project manager: ruthgarner1@compuserve.com

2. 'Non-traditional forms of employment DVD' - A case study DVD capturing the experiences of women entering traditionally, male-dominated forms of employment. The DVD features case studies from Catalonia, Spain, the UK and Germany.

Project manager: charlotte.carey@bcu.ac.uk

3. Women's Training Programme was also devised and piloted.

Project manager: margaret.dilloway@bournville.ac.uk

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4. 'Good practice in gender equality DVD' - a DVD for employers capturing companies' good practice in gender equality.

Project manager: Claire Hardwick

5. A European Employer's Award Scheme rewarding SMEs employing good gender policies.

Project manager: Claire Hardwick

6. 'Women in Europe: unlocking hidden potential' - a booklet challenging gender stereotypes and showcasing good practices in services supporting women in the labour market.

Project manager: Lloyd.broad@birmingham.gov.uk

12. POLICY

Equal is one of a number of EU initiatives designed to help Member States achieve its targets for growth and new jobs as outlined in its Lisbon Guidelines. Birmingham City Council engaged Inlogov at the University of Birmingham to examine the work of the transnational partnership and link it to both the EU Employment Guidelines and Lisbon Objectives. This piece of evaluative work measured the impact of the transnational partnership on these objectives. The reports focused on 8 of the 24 Lisbon guidelines and 11 case studies were crystallized to illustrate the response of **Wings**.

Four policy recommendations were put forward for the **Agender** partnership. (See **Wings Final Report**)

13. MAINSTREAMING AND DISSEMINATION

- **Horizontal dissemination**
This is dissemination across an organisation or amongst different types of organisations.
- **Vertical dissemination**
This takes place within a single organisation and ensures making sure that key people at the top of the organisation are aware of what you are doing.

This is not an exhaustive list of the mainstreaming and dissemination outcomes from our transnational project, as we are still in this phase and are generating more outcomes. Achievements to date include:

A) Lisbon: Connecting Policy with Practice Event.

The policy work linking practical local project activity to the Lisbon objectives and EU employment guidelines provided the backbone for the Lisbon: Connecting Policy with Practice event on 7.11.07.

200 delegates from across the EU attended the event hosted by the West Midlands in Europe Office, Brussels. All 33 policy recommendations from four Birmingham and Solihull Equal projects were presented to a distinguished audience of senior EU representatives, policy makers and Heads of Organisations. Key speakers included Graham Meadows, Special Advisor to Commissioner Spidla at Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs, MEPs Liz Lynne and

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Thomas Mann, Florence Gerard, Senior Consultant for IFAPLAN EUROPS assisting the EU Commission in the implementation of Equal, and Gerhard Braeunling, Head of Section, Transnationality – ESF, DG Employment and Social Affairs. A showcase networking session followed the conference and provided delegates with the opportunity to visit individual project stands to gather further information.

One outcome from the conference was Graham Meadow's request to have a copy of all products and outcomes from this network of 17 Equal projects. These will be housed at the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs.

B) Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming Group

Lloyd Broad, senior European Funding Officer for Birmingham City Council is now a member of the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming Group which may allow him to influence thematic focus of future funding programmes and transpose learning and recommendations from Inlogov and shape future funding programmes and their focus.

14. LESSONS LEARNED

Over the two years of delivering this transnational project, a number of challenges have been identified and overcome. It is crucial to bear these in mind when developing future transnational partnerships. Some of these barriers include:

- **Expectations/aspirations and commitment.** Stakeholders involved in transnationality must be informed about whom they are working with and what benefits transnational working can bring to a local project activity.
- **Well-informed partners,** cognizant of the potential for **added value,** are more likely to be enthusiastic committed ones.
- **Culture and language.** Cultural sensitivity and respect is an absolute necessity when working at a transnational level. Stakeholders should avoid using jargon in their written and oral communication and adjust the pace of their speech.
- **Communication.** Regular communication between transnational and local partners is needed to ensure the momentum is maintained when developing products/ joint research.
- **Timing.** Europe has not synchronised its project delivery timetable. Project delivery phases commence and finish at different times across the EU.
- **National Rules and Constraints.** Differences in criteria for eligible funding between member states can hamper transnational cooperation. Knowledge of these differences is needed at project outset.
- **Budgets/funding.** Co-operation can be challenging when working with transnational partners with different budgets at their disposal. These challenges are not insurmountable, but require partners to provide creative solutions.

Successful cooperation requires:

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- appropriate planning which would include clear agreement and understanding of the following:
- Sufficient resource for an effective management structure. A dedicated, full-time staff is necessary to effectively deliver transnationality. The transnational work for four transnational projects, (with a total value of £750,000), was co-ordinated by a transnational Manager, two European Project Officers and one Finance and Monitoring Officer.
- Good management – including robust monitoring and evaluation
- Allow sufficient time for planning – clear timetable (building in milestones)
- Development of clear mutual objectives.
- Develop a framework for communication and understanding – agreed protocols (including terms of reference).
- Understand the tiers of cooperation.
- Understand policy linkages.
- Review mechanisms – to include monitoring progress against agreed milestones and measuring success against aims and objectives

Record the journey to measure impact and increase visibility.

It is difficult to measure impact and mainstream success if a complete record of the collaboration is not maintained. This will help us learn from new experiences (positive and negative) and build upon this learning, as well as documenting ways in which challenges were met and overcome.