



CIP EQUAL

- 1 Fair of innovations for the open labour market
- 2 Events to date
- 3 Forthcoming events
- 4 Evaluation of CIP EQUAL
- 5 Products under the spotlight, 3 questions for their creators
- 6 Interesting facts about the projects
- 7 Mainstreaming and National Thematic Networks
- 8 EQUAL in Europe
- 9 European social fund 2007–2013

Dear Readers,

You are currently looking through the sixth issue of CIP EQUAL Bulletin, providing up-to-date information about this programme.

This year, 2008, is more or less the last year of implementation of EQUAL projects during which they will deliver their outputs – social innovations on the labour market. Currently, therefore, work is going ahead at full pace to distribute and implement these innovative tools and processes, through such means as round table meetings with regional or national politicians and policy-makers, as well as through presentations to MPs in the Czech Parliament and by broadening contacts to disseminate outputs to other countries in the EU. The projects are also organising their own closing conferences where participants will be briefed on successes achieved and innovations created. The process of promoting outputs (known as “mainstreaming”) is also being supported at the level of the Managing Authority for the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL

(CIP EQUAL) – the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (MoLSA CR). The Managing Authority is the official sponsor of a process known as vertical mainstreaming, the object of which is to transfer innovations to a higher, primarily national level. In April, we held a closing conference for the programme and much of this issue of the Bulletin is devoted to this. The conference bore the subtitle “Fair of innovations for the open labour market” and its main purpose was to provide a comprehensive platform – in terms of workshops and exhibitions – which could display products developed as part of the EQUAL projects. Additionally, it sought to look into the future at further possibilities which are now becoming apparent whereby good practice developed through EQUAL can be utilised in new programmes co-financed by the European Social Fund for the period 2007–2013. From the beginning of April, we also held a number of meetings with relevant departments of MoLSA CR

which are key for labour market policy and approached further ministries, institutions and local government authorities with the official backing of the Minister, Mr. Nečas. Additionally, outputs of EQUAL which were designed for labour offices were handed over to the directors of all labour offices in the Czech Republic, via the Employment Services Administration section of MoLSA CR. We believe that the efforts of all those involved in the EQUAL programme will be successful and that the outputs of EQUAL projects, which are of high quality and relevance, will find increasing application in both practice and policy.

I wish you interesting reading.

Ing. Renáta Haroková

Head of the Department for Management and Implementation of the Community Initiative EQUAL
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
of the Czech Republic

Fair of innovations for the open labour market

During 22–23 April in the National House of Vinohrady a closing conference was held for the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL with a subtitle of “Fair of innovations for the open labour market”. It was attended by almost 350 people and its primary purpose was to support the mainstreaming of developed products, meaning to gain approval for them so that they can be implemented in current practice. Amongst the people who were invited to help achieve this goal were the representatives of the relevant ministries and labour offices. This conference was the last in the series of annual conferences of CIP EQUAL and was above all an excellent opportunity to present tools and processes developed through EQUAL projects to policy makers and experts in various fields. It was this

goal which gave rise to the subtitle. The Managing Authority of CIP EQUAL (the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic) made great efforts to support the dissemination and mainstreaming these project outputs on the labour market, both in terms of policy and current practice. The conference was opened by Iva Šolcová, Director of the Department for ESF management and Director General in charge for EU and International Relations (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic). Peter Stub Jørgensen, Director of the European Social Fund section – Monitoring of Corresponding National Policies II (European Commission), spoke at the conference and emphasised the importance of partnership in introducing innovative approaches and to achieve change in

employment policy. Alongside partnership and innovation, the European Commission also views international co-operation as contributing significantly to meeting the objectives of the Lisbon reform agenda and is therefore placing great importance on its promotion during the 2007–2013 programme period. Amongst the other speakers was Marie Bílková, Head of section of the Director General for Employment Services Administration (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic) who stated that, although there is a low level of unemployment at the moment, it is the most disadvantaged who are remaining unemployed. It is to this group that it is necessary to provide effective and comprehensive support. For this reason, Employment Services Administration and individual



Closing Conference CIP EQUAL, Prague, 22–23 April 2008, opening

labour offices are actively engaged in the CIP EQUAL projects and are contributing to the implementation of EQUAL outputs in current practice. During the plenary session, there were speeches by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Ondřej Liška, and by Patricia Tiso Ferulíková, Director of the EU Funds Department (Prague City Council), who represented the Managing Authorities of two operational programmes co-financed by the European Social Fund during the 2007–2013 programme period (respectively, the operational programmes Education for Competitiveness and Prague – Adaptability), which will also benefit from the principles and experience acquired through CIP EQUAL. The closing conference centred around workshops on particular themes where the most interesting outputs from projects were presented under the various national thematic networks (NTN) – more about the course of individual workshops to follow. The conference closed with a summary of the basic conclusions drawn from the individual workshops and up-to-date information was presented from the Human Resources and Employment Operational Programme, particularly regarding the possibility of connecting this to work carried out in the EQUAL programme. During the course of the two days, there were also displays of project results which provided an excellent opportunity to talk directly with their creators. Evaluation by conference attendees was very positive. Guests particularly appreciated the theme-based workshops and stated that what they learned would cer-

tainly be of benefit for their future work. The number of new contacts they made which could be used in the future was also perceived positively.

NTN A

Facilitating access and return to the labour market for persons who have difficulty in being integrated into the labour market

During the first day of the NTN A workshop, the NTN Chairperson, Mr. Kocánek, introduced this NTN, which is made up of over 100 organisations in 10 development partnerships. There are very varied target groups for this NTN (persons with disabilities, persons released from prison, Roma people, etc.), however the main area of work is in providing support for people with disabilities. The beneficiary EDOST was the first organisation to present their product, which is aimed at **rehabilitating people with disabilities so they can return to work**. Mrs. Švestková from the 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University explained that the intention of this project is to reverse the approach of “negative work recommendations” used until now to the opposite approach based on what the person is still able to do (known as “positive work recommendations”). The “Isenhagen work system” was introduced, enabling objectification of the physical capabilities of the client. This system has already been set up in several regions. The comment was made that even the most

expensive equipment is still cheaper than assistance by a second person. Long-term NTN A expert Mr. Víšek emphasised that it is necessary to change the current system of social benefits payments, which do not motivate clients to return to work. Afterwards, Mrs. Miškovská from the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and Mr. Vyhnaň from the company S-Comp presented a **job portal for people with disabilities** www.praceprozp.cz. This portal enables its users either to search for job opportunities or to post the job offers. Amongst other services, it also provides advice and is also available in a “blind friendly” version.

On the second day of the workshop, there were presentations of a further two products from this NTN. First of all, a representative of Slezská Diakonie presented a **Methodological reintegration process package for the homeless people**. This comprises three parts: education, work, accommodation. Of the 34 people who joined the work programme, 15 are now employed. Of the 43 people who joined the accommodation training programme, 20 have now found their own accommodation. Mr. Víšek warned of the dangers of homelessness, which threatens up to 10% of the EU population due to non-payment of rent. In closing, Mr. Merhout from the company TROAS presented the newly-created **Method handbook for education in PC graphics for the hard of hearing**. Mr. Víšek in conclusion stated that this project proves that technology is easily able to overcome barriers and does not discriminate against those with disabilities.

NTN B

Setting up businesses and development of individual entrepreneurship

The workshop for NTN B was opened by its Chairperson, Mr. Witassek. By way of introduction, he presented the work and activities of NTN, which is aimed at setting up and supporting the running of social businesses. It also provides comprehensive information, an advisory system and a scheme for advantageous financial loans for new entrepreneurs, when this is required. This part of the NTN B strategy is based on three important points – an initial set of rules for the START programme, an assistance centre for new entrepreneurs and the introduction of enterprise training in schools. As Mr. Witassek emphasised, running a business is not an easy task for

anyone and for persons who are vulnerable on the labour market, whether they are mothers coming to the end of their maternity leave, people over 50 or those with disabilities, it is even harder. Therefore, any activity which is designed to increase their independence is important. An experienced expert, Mr. Coufalík, then stated that the outputs from the projects are very diverse. As they encompass a wide range of forms of help for new entrepreneurs, it is difficult to inform the public about them in a way that promotes them effectively. The first product presented was a re-qualification course which is part of the project for **Support for stabilisation and re-integration of active senior citizens** and which includes a system for diagnostics, coaching and self-presentation for persons



Closing Conference CIP EQUAL, Prague, 22–23 April 2008, opening

over 45 years of age. Mr. Knapil presented information to participants about a house where trades professionals can refresh their professional experience and develop the knowledge necessary for starting their own business. During discussion, it was stated that the House of Trades and Association of Experienced Workers functions as part of the Polytechnic Secondary School in Brno. Mr. Coufalík started discussion on the possibility of extending these systems into other regions and on how they could be funded after the project ends. Mr. Knapil stated that the main problem in the dissemination process is that of developing suitable contacts and partnerships, as well as that of limited finances. The Association of Experienced Workers, which connects clients with employers, should be able to provide a solution to the question of how to continue the project.

A short documentary film, which had been created as part of the Other Reality project, was well received. Called “Hours”, it relates the story of Mr. Podrázka, who started his own business as a masseur after he lost his sight. At the end of this session, there was a short interview with Mr. Podrázka, who played the leading role in the film and was present at the event, and with his wife. Workshop participants also saw the motivational film “We are not alone”, which narrated the stories of three women who found themselves in difficult life situations, but nonetheless managed to start up or continue their business enterprise. In response to a question from an experienced expert on film distribution, Mr. Smoljak stated that these will be presented via the media and at a festival in Hradec Králové in June 2008.

of training develops women’s soft skills. Its creators are preparing these courses for accreditation.

NTN C

Strengthening the social economy, in particular the services of interest to the community

By way of introduction, Robert Sztarovicz gave an overview of the work of NTN C and presented its shared output which takes the form of a jointly-administered website at www.socialni-ekonomika.cz. Following this, an experienced expert in the field, Petra Francová, spoke on a further joint output of NTN C – a definition of social economics and enterprise. Members of the NTN consider this definition to be a foundation for further discussion on understanding and supporting social economics in the Czech Republic.

The first product presented was **The social company – a new model for the employment of persons who are disadvantaged on the labour market**, which was introduced by Markéta Würtherlová from the company FOKUS Praha. This product is a handbook which contains a definition of the social company, as well as standards for the functioning of social companies. It is intended to act as support material for the set-up and running of social companies. Two social companies which are run in accordance with outputs from the project were also described in the presentation. One of these is the social company Zahrada (meaning “Garden”), which employs 9 people, of whom 6 suffer from mental illness, and the social company Café Therapy, which employs a total of 16 people, of whom 8 have a history of drug addiction. During discussion, Mrs. Růt Kolínská disagreed with an opinion which was expressed that the public sector is too quick to promote the use of limited liability companies for social companies. Mr. Oto Potluka in turn gave his opinion that a co-operative association is the ideal form, as this allows the employees to be involved in its running. Mrs. Würtherlová stated that all forms of enterprise could be suitable, depending on the circumstances, although a certain degree of transparency in accountability, etc., would be required. In conclusion, she mentioned that the handbook and case studies will be available for not-for-profit organisations and that she would approach Prague City Council and other borough councils to request that they support and utilise of these kinds of activities.

The next presentation provided an introduction to the product **A handbook for municipalities to set up social co-operatives** by representatives of the partnership between K. Rychtář of the Association of Czech and Moravian Manufacturing Co-operatives and V. Mikulášek from the co-operative SENZA Prostějov. This project has already resulted in municipalities founding 15 co-operatives, which is proof of the fact that this tried and tested project has become a successfully used tool. These co-operatives, which draw on the Czech tradition in this field, provide jobs for disadvantaged persons and enable the provision of much-needed services to municipalities. At the same time, they can generate funds for development of their municipality or micro-region. During discussion after the presentation, concern was expressed over the potential for a low degree of solidarity. However, Mr. Rychtář refused this on the basis of his personal experience. In reply to a question as to whether the product would also be distributed in Prague, he replied that it would not as it was more suitable for rural areas.

On the second day, the workshop was launched by a presentation of products by a partnership of the company Kazuist, represented by Mrs. Jarmila Šagátová. First of all, she introduced the product **social incubator**, which is aimed at preparing for the individual phases of social enterprise (1. decision-making: is this particular entrepreneur at all suitable for social enterprise? 2. planning – accredited course – How to run a social company, 3. development – theme-based tutorials). Following this, there was a presentation of outputs from a project for the support of social tourism. Mrs. Šagátová explained the criteria used to evaluate the accessibility of tourist facilities for persons with disabilities, and gave details about certification system and the emblem awarded to particular facilities as proof of achieving a level of quality. A further product for this project was also introduced, the **social observatory**, which is an internet portal that maps accessibility within the region for people with disabilities. At the end of the presentation, Mrs. Šagátová mentioned one of the successes of the project, which was to agree co-operation with NRZP ČR (December 2007 – declaration on co-operation). Projects which have been started will therefore continue in the future. During discussion, Mrs. Šagátová then said that a range of auxiliary services have developed around these products, i.e. there has been growth of opportunities, in terms of both business development and job creation. She also added that other

organisations which were interested in gaining certification in other regions would be able to set up franchises, i.e. they would have to adhere to the conditions set by the creators of the project. In conclusion, it was stated that the funding of supplementary costs for hoteliers to acquire certification is a frequent problem, but that clients are finding the benefits sufficiently attractive. In time, certain costs will be able to be covered from EU structural funds.

The last presentation was given by R. Sztarovicz of Nový Prostor on the subject of **public contracts as a market for social companies**. Nový Prostor has introduced a method for calling for tenders into the Czech Republic which was inspired by developments in the United Kingdom, which has considerable experience in this field. In the UK, the aim of these public contracts is not only to supply the requirement at lowest cost while maintaining a particular level of quality, but also to improve the local economy (increased education, ecological and social impact, etc.). Mr. Sztarovicz then mentioned why this approach has not as yet been introduced into the Czech Republic (low awareness about the option to reflect social objectives in assessment criteria; this method of calling for public tenders was not as yet tried in the Czech Republic; public contracts are enormous and there-



Closing Conference CIP EQUAL, Prague, 22–23 April 2008, project results

fore small businesses have no chance to compete). Then his colleague at Nový Prostor, the lawyer Mr. Jiří Taišl, described the European and Czech legislative frameworks surrounding this issue and the conditions under which “social public contracts” can be implemented. During discussion, repre-

sentatives of MoLSA CR expressed concern that the use of this kind of invitation-to-tender could lead to distortions. A representative of Prague City Council stated that this method of tendering had been used by labour offices, but that it had been stopped after problems were experienced.

NTN D

Supporting adaptability and lifelong learning

By way of introduction to the workshop, the Chairperson of NTN D presented this group, which is aimed towards supporting adaptability and life-long learning. Mr. Karásek emphasised the importance of co-operation which had been agreed and which had led, for example, to the joint preparation of new activities and projects for the new ESF programme period, as well as to the creation of working sub-teams and the presentation of group outputs in both the Czech Republic and the EU.

The first product presented at the workshop was the **Partnership for social development, or “how Old Father Krakonoš helped Forester, Kuba and Anče to get an education”** from the beneficiary Semily Labour Office. This product contains a description of the know-how and system

Mr. Barták, asked how many municipalities there are in the Czech Republic with populations under 2000 inhabitants (the target group of the project). Representatives of the project replied that this was approximately 40% of the total. The project has already managed to agree on co-operation with both the Liberec and Zlín regions, where in both cases discussions have commenced on the possibility to extend the project throughout the entire region.

The second product to be presented was the **Centre for employee support** created as part of the project by Dopravní vzdělávací institut, a.s. (Transport Education Institute, joint stock company). The aim of this product is to help those who want to develop their career or change jobs, and to offer help to everyone who has lost their job or is worried that they will lose it in the near future. The Centre which has been created provides educational courses and advice. In terms of tangible outputs, it also produces methodologies, teaching materials and brochures. Part of the presentation was introduction of Mrs. Vlasta, who completed a three-month educational programme as a client of the project. After this, workshop attendees were split into teams which had to identify work skills that are in demand on the current labour market, as well as groups which are disadvantaged on this market, and then list what an employer should do in order not to lose his employees.

On the second day of the workshop, the first product to be presented was the project **We can do it** created by the beneficiary RPIC-ViP, which is aimed at developing abilities (soft skills) required for the labour market. The presentation contained an example of training in key skills which are required by employers and are vital for finding work. Through interactive and experienced-based training, attendees were given a chance to try to identify key skills and to see how skills training is carried out in practice. During discussion, the project developers stated that employees generally identify around 50 separate skills, but that employers do not have strong views on the individual levels of abilities needed. The product has been distributed via trainers (roughly 500 teachers have been trained in the region in question) and discussions are underway for its use by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (MEYS CR).

The workshop was then concluded by representatives of the IQ Roma Service project with their presentation of **Methodologies for comprehensive work with young people from socially excluded areas of ages 13–18**. This is a comprehensive



Closing Conference CIP EQUAL, Prague, 22–23 April 2008, thematic workshop

system developed for work with Roma youth of ages 13–18 providing advice on education, personal development and social skills. Work is carried out in the community itself and the whole family of the client is involved. A very interesting EEG bio feedback method was also presented, which enables the targeted monitoring of a client's perception, mood, attention span and focus on learning. The subject of co-operation with schools was brought up during discussion time. The project attempts to provide advice on selecting a secondary school or apprenticeship college, as well as on options for a subsequent career. A recommendation was made that the project should also work with MEYS CR to encourage pupils not to leave school prematurely.

NTN E

Equal opportunities for women and men

The workshop for NTN E was launched by its Chairperson, Mrs. Sokačová, who presented the main work and activities of this group, which is primarily to respond to the adverse situation on the labour market regarding the standing of women and men, and to help find a balance between family and work life. A total of three products were presented at the workshop.

The first product **Choosing a career without gender stereotypes** was presented by Ms. Smetáčková from the organisation Open Society. The aim of the product is to draw attention to gender stereotypes

which commonly influence career choices and to outline the advantages and benefits that thinking without gender stereotypes can bring. Both male and female workshop attendees were able to try their hand at an activity which is a form of training designed for both boys and girls at primary and secondary schools. The results were very similar to those generated by school-age students. In the discussion that followed, it was mentioned that the results of this activity, which had been conducted in selected schools throughout the whole Czech Republic, differed according to the different regions (the lowest incidence of gender stereotyping was in Prague).

Ms. Machovcová from the company Gender Studies presented one of the parts of the project which is designed to inform companies that adopting equal opportunities is, in the final result, financially beneficial. After the presentation of this product, attendees broke into small groups to discuss what arrangement of work hours would be the most acceptable for them, and what the positive and negative points of such an arrangement would be. In conclusion, Ms. Machovcová stated that companies are changing their approach and that now they are contacting Gender Studies on their own initiative (here also, however, regional differences are apparent in approaches to the issue of equal opportunities).

In conclusion, there was a presentation of **the family of products for increasing the employability on the labour market of people coming to the end of maternity/paternity leave** by Ms. Bečková and Ms. Uchytlová from the company Bridge to Education. A long-term expert,

Ms. Šmídová, stressed to the necessity of adhering to gender correctness in the use of language. Ms. Šmídová mentioned the usefulness of co-operation with labour offices, which will be vital to the future roll-out of this product.

NTN F

Integration into the labour market for foreigners

The work of National Thematic Network F was presented on the second day. The theme of this meeting focused on the subject of teaching the Czech language, as the ability to communicate in Czech is a key skill for the successful integration of foreigners into the Czech labour market. In fact, both the presentations in this workshop presented Czech language teaching materials for foreigners.

Chairperson of the network, Mr. Götz, gave a brief introduction to NTN F. He emphasised the importance of co-operation which had been agreed and presented the joint activities of projects associated under this group. These joint outputs were comics that deal with the problems of legal versus illegal work, videos giving information on target groups and round table discussion on the subject of foreigners and their integration into Czech society. After this, the projects were able to make their presentations.

The first organisation presenting its Czech language textbook was the Institute of Language and Preparatory Studies of Charles University with "Czech in Czechia" as presented by Dana Nývltová. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the target group, this project selected a strategy of producing two sets of textbooks, one for students with knowledge of Roman script, and one for students with knowledge of Russian. Following this, the project "Why shouldn't they be included?" presented its materials. Their textbooks, introduced by Marta Rybíčková, are aimed at applicants for international protection. Four sets of materials include the manual "First week with the Czech language", intended for teaching Czech as early on as in the reception centre, the manual "We want to understand and get by" designed as a long-term

course for multicultural centres, a manual for language skills preparation for selected professions, and a manual for teachers, which, amongst other matters, highlights the problems associated with cultural differences in the target group.

The discussion that followed initially covered the fact that both the teaching materials presented and the videos shown presuppose the classification of clients' projects solely in low skilled work. The main restricting factor that was mentioned was the limited knowledge of Czech language amongst most of the target group (A1 according to the Common European Reference Framework), which does not enable the performance of more skilled professions. At the same time, the CIP EQUAL project Work in Czech and Work in Prague was also mentioned. This is aimed precisely at supporting the employment of foreigners in more qualified posts.

Following this, the discussion turned to language learning by foreigners in general. Due to the fact that various sets of textbooks have originated through several EQUAL projects, there was a further question as to whether the current authors in different projects would try to work together more (the sense of this being to prevent the creation of similar materials/

textbooks). Mr. Götz replied to this that, if it was possible to continue with NTN work, they would certainly be interested in co-operation. Mention was also made of the less than satisfactory state of language examinations, which falls under the authority of MEYS CR. The Pedagogical Research Institute (PRI) now has the task of preparing examinations for the A1 level. The question was raised as to whether during the preparation of examinations the PRI will also draw on the outputs of the products which had just been presented. Representatives of the PRI stated that they draw information from available sources, meaning that the materials presented could also be used as a source of information.

Prospects concerning the future operation of multicultural centres were also mentioned, in that these centres are also part of the "Why shouldn't they be included?" project, in addition to the textbooks. A representative of the project stated they will continue to function on the condition that ESF funding is forthcoming. The centres will probably progressively close otherwise. Further information of the closing conference, including its presentations, are available on www.equalcr.cz, where a conference proceedings, which is currently being completed, will also be located.



Closing Conference CIP EQUAL, Prague, 22–23 April 2008, plenary session

Events to date

Workshop on vertical mainstreaming

Vertical mainstreaming, as it is understood within CIP EQUAL, means the implementation of a newly-created product in practice through gaining approval to introduce system changes. This could take place, for example, through an amendment to legislation or a change in working practice at the level of labour offices. In view of the fact that gaining approval for system changes has proved to be one of the most challenging tasks for development partnerships (DP), a workshop on vertical mainstreaming was held on 20 March. An expert from a public affairs company spoke during the first part. The presentation on the subject "How to communicate with public administration in order to gain approval for one's proposals" showed beneficiaries not only how to prepare communications strategies, but also about the potential risks which have to be counted with. During the afternoon session, workshop attendants had the chance to try preparing strategy and guidelines for negotiating with policy makers.

International evaluation seminar

During 28–30 January 2008 in Prague, there was a meeting of professionals at an international level called the "EQUAL Evaluation Seminar". The main purpose of this event was to share experiences and results in the field of evaluating EQUAL programmes and projects, as well as to compare and make use of experiences with the evaluation of other programmes and projects co-funded by the European Social Fund. An equally important aim of the seminar was also to support personal contact between experts in the field of evaluation in member states of the European Union. The seminar was attended by a total of 59 representatives of the European Commission, programme implementation organisations and independent evaluation experts from 17 EU states. The seminar was part of the work of the "EQUAL Evaluation Community of Inquiry and Practice" project, which aims to encourage exchanges of experiences between evaluation experts, those in programme managing authorities and representatives of the European Commission in the field of programme and project evalua-

tion for the period 2007–2013. This seminar drew attention from experts both from the more recent member states of the EU (such as Slovenia, Poland and Estonia), as well as from the older member states (for example, Finland, Germany and Belgium), who discussed evaluation of the EQUAL programme and the possibility of transferring best evaluation practice from this programme to other European programmes for the period 2007–2013.

The seminar was devoted to innovation in the evaluation process, methods and techniques, as well as to the compilation of a new evaluation "sourcebook", which was presented by Jan Šild and Martina Hartlová from the company HOPE-E.S. Clare Engel from the London office of GLE talked on practical experiences of building up capacity in self-evaluation at the project level in the United Kingdom, whereby results can be used to evaluate the programme. Mr. Vít Kettner from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic also made an important contribution concerning the evaluation community and on sharing experiences and good practice through the ESF Forum website (<https://forum.esfcr.cz>), where information on all the seminar presentations can be found.



International Expert Meeting EQUAL Evaluation Seminar, 28–30 January 2008

Forthcoming events

The seminar on project closure has been planned for 9 June 2008 which will be the final seminar for CIP EQUAL beneficiaries. This is the second seminar on this subject. The first seminar on project closure was held in September 2007. This objective of this event was to present to beneficiaries the updated form of closure documentation with sufficient advance notice and to give information about the basic conditions for terminating programmes. The second seminar is planned mainly as a reminder of the rules on project closure during the time of actual conclusion of their implementation, as well as to present information arising from the updated Methodological Instructions for Closure of Projects. A number of projects will finish in June 2008, but most close at the end of August 2008. Participants at the seminar will learn more about processing closure documentation on the performance of project activities and about final accounting for grants. They will also gain further information on the financial aspects of their projects.

4 Evaluation CIP EQUAL

Ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL

CIP EQUAL has undergone two evaluations during the past years. The evaluation project "First stage of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL" took place in 2005. This evaluation focused on assessing the suitability and relevance of the selected strategy, as well as appraisal of management, implementation and monitoring systems both at Managing Authority and development partnership (DP) levels. The degree of success in creating DPs and international co-operation was also evaluated, as well as the fulfilment of EQUAL principles. In 2006, the project for a "Second stage of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL" was completed. This evaluation focused on the impact of the first round of the Community Initiative EQUAL in the Czech Republic and took stock of the implementation and monitoring system, appraisal of theme-based approaches, fulfilment of key principles of CIP EQUAL and DP self-assessment.

Currently, the "Third stage of ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL" is in progress. This evaluates the principles of partnership, empowerment, innovation and mainstreaming; a fifth evaluation area covers the impact of CIP EQUAL at the level of the Czech Republic as a whole. This project is now roughly half way through implementation. In addition to the initial report, the deliverables which have already been generated include a concluding report for 2007, an ongoing report as of 31 March 2008 and two dissemination seminars which have been held.

On 24 January 2008 in Prague, there was a dissemination seminar to present the "Final report 2007" to key people involved in implementation of ESF programmes. This report was presented by representatives of the companies IREAS and EVASCO that are progressively drawing up this evaluation study between August 2007 and November 2008 for the CIP EQUAL Managing Authority. At the beginning of the seminar, the methodology for conducting the project

was introduced. Amongst other matters, the very interesting concept was presented which concerns a questionnaire survey method. A questionnaire has been posted on the website of the company IREAS since January 2008 and all participants involved in CIP EQUAL development partnerships have been asked to co-operate in filling it in. The results for 2007 show that CIP EQUAL is working well and that the vast majority of its main deficiencies have been resolved. This was possible above all through the thorough implementation of measures which were adopted following recommendations made in the second stage of CIP EQUAL evaluation, particularly regarding the implementation of principles and self-assessment.

The second dissemination seminar in the third stage of CIP EQUAL evaluation took place on 30 April 2008 in Prague and this was devoted to the ongoing evaluation report. Again, the aim of the seminar was to inform key players in ESF programmes about the results of EQUAL up to that time and about experiences with EQUAL principles which will be met during the 2007–2013 programme period. After Ing. Renáta Haroková, the representative of the CIP EQUAL Managing Authority, opened the seminar, Ing. Oto Potluka, Head of the Evaluation Team, presented the methodology and history to date for this project. He stated that the questionnaire survey, which took place from January to the end of February and as part of which all the development partnerships involved in CIP EQUAL were approached, had a 50% successful return rate. The main section of the structured interviews was also completed, with roughly half of the development partnerships taking part. When explaining about assessing the principle of innovation, the evaluator drew attention to the necessity of clearly defining basic concepts, as this is a key factor in ensuring that true innovations are created and introduced. This recommendation is mainly relevant at the moment with regard to the new ESF programmes for 2007–2013. A further interesting conclusion concerned the

implementation of projects in partnership, where there is a need to establish conditions correctly so that the potential for co-operation between the partners is fully utilised. Evaluators were clearly impressed by the effectiveness of the National Thematic Networks for CIP EQUAL which, in contrast to other types of co-operation agreed outside CIP EQUAL (working groups, committees, etc.), proved to be highly value adding within CIP EQUAL by the fact that the active involvement of key figures contributed to the effective sharing of experience and to joint promotion of outputs in policy and practice.

Evaluation of principles for international co-operation, partnership and gender mainstreaming

Alongside the ongoing evaluation of CIP EQUAL implementation, detailed evaluation of the key principles on which CIP EQUAL is based is also currently starting to take place; this concerns evaluation of the principles of partnership, international co-operation and gender mainstreaming. The aim of this evaluation is on one hand to assess the implementation of these principles in CIP EQUAL and on the other, through analysing experiences to date, to determine the optimum way of supporting them in the new ESF programmes. Evaluators process recommendations for all forms of implementation structure (managing authority, intermediate bodies, beneficiaries, administrators) and, in the case of the Priority Axis of international co-operation in the Human Resources and Employment Operational Programme (HRE OP), submit an overall proposal for implementation of this Priority Axis. In this way, there is a high degree of support for transfer of EQUAL principles into the new programme period. The recommendations from these evaluation studies will also be formulated for CIP EQUAL managing authority in order to optimise the final stage of CIP EQUAL implementation. Evaluation studies will not be restricted to assessing implementation of principles only in the Czech Republic, but will also cover other selected EU member states. One of the outputs will also be the development of a series of case studies, again in the Czech Republic and other EU countries. In this way, the evaluation studies will be useful for managing authorities in all the EU member states. In order to enable dissemination of results at an international level, evaluators will obtain translations of concluding reports in English.

5 Products under the spotlight, 3 questions for their creators

Textbook materials for teaching Czech as a foreign language – Czech in Czechia

Textbooks from the project Human Step Czech in Czechia I & II (for students with a knowledge of Roman script, and for students with a knowledge of Russian) are designed not only for applicants for international protection, but also for other foreigners who are interested and have language skills at beginner or low intermediate level. The textbooks were created for use in study groups which have diverse language, age, education and socio-cultural backgrounds and where the use of a single common language to mediate with is not expected.

Students are not only familiarised with socio-cultural skills, but can also master them in the section "We live in the Czech Republic". It is possible to return to this section and to the section "Do you remember?", making them "mobile parts of the textbook".

There is a glossary at the end of each lesson which contains the new words used in the lesson. The vocabulary has been selected to be in accordance with level A1 of the Common European Reference Framework for Languages with the reference description of Czech as a Foreign Language A1, including the recommended phraseology. These textbooks have been developed to be (to a certain degree) adaptable even to the needs of new students joining the class. The

materials are in two parts and each part is divided into 8 lessons. Lessons do not have the same structure or number of pages. The materials also have thematic sections within which the teaching is continuous (the traditional, repeating structure of text, grammar, then drill is not employed here). Great emphasis has been placed on the use of signalling and on simplified linguistic terminology. The quantity of pictures also plays an important role. These have been included in lessons on purpose and it is necessary to work with them properly. These textbooks originated through co-operation with Czech language teachers in the Kostelec nad Orlicí processing centre, where the materials were tried out during 2006 and 2007 on several Czech courses.

Mastery of these skills was deepened and developed (after reaching a certain level of language ability) in related courses on socio-cultural skills. For these courses, the partnership organisation Step by Step developed another set of materials: "How to live Czech in Czechia".

Václav Götz,
project co-ordinator

1) What do you consider to be the greatest success of your project?

Its greatest success can be considered to be that it has met the objectives and aims which the development partnership set out at the beginning of Action 1, whether this concerns meeting the principles of the EQUAL programme (for example partnership, innovative approaches, international co-operation), or the actual aims of the development partnership which were primarily "the creation and verification in pilot form of a model to improve the access of asylum applicants to the labour market and to improve their skills, enabling applicants to adapt better to any labour market".

2) How is the public responding to the outputs from your project?

Contact with the public has been established, mainly with other professionals in the field. Discussion on the State's integration policy has taken shape through a large number of seminars and conferences. Part of the project was also the creation of a documentary on DVD, which enables a wide circle of professionals to become familiarised with the problems of the target group and with their potential solutions. A positive response is especially to the teaching materials created for foreigners entitled "Czech in Czechia" and to the handbook on socio-cultural skills "How to live Czech in Czechia".

3) Where do you see your product in 3 years from now?

In three years' time, it would be possible to use this basic model and develop it further to create a single, unified system for integrating foreigners into the labour market of the Czech Republic using the European Language Reference Framework as a basis for setting various levels of knowledge (from beginner-level communication skills up to professional use of the language for communication). This system would set clear criteria for testing knowledge of Czech language and Czech customs according to the different reasons for staying in the host country (study, work, permanent residence). It would also be possible to provide accreditation to organisations which could carry out these tests. This system could also include recognition of previous study, or validation of professional experience in particular sectors.

Methodology: "Work rehabilitation in regional co-operation networks"

The issue of work rehabilitation and methods for improving access to the labour market for persons with disabilities, or their return to work, is the focus of the project called Rehabilitation – Activation – Work (RAW). Its main purpose is to support the creation of a work rehabilitation system and processes which ensure the most effective use of tools for work rehabilitation. The project works

with new methods, tools and approaches in such a way as to meet the intentions of the sections on work rehabilitation in the Act on Employment.

The main outputs of the project include an Advisory Programme for People with Disabilities, the use of positive work recommendations on disabilities through task classification, a casuistic conference

which encourages a multidisciplinary approach to persons with disabilities, and the creation of working co-operation networks between entities which can contribute to work rehabilitation. The approach mentioned in the title is adopted by those involved in work rehabilitation (labour offices, educational organisations, healthcare facilities, employers, people with disabilities, etc.) to define their roles and the relationships arising between them. These roles and

relationships are thereafter not just a desired “wish list” as their subsequent functioning is fundamental to the strategy of the entire Rehabilitation – Activation – Work project.

Kamila Andrášková,
expert on the project Rehabilitation – Activation – Work

1) What do you consider to be the greatest success of this project?

At the Pentacom development partnership, which consists of 40 partners, we see our biggest success in support for the work rehabilitation system. More than 140 people with disabilities have passed through our advisory programme, in this way gaining important information on their ability to work and on potential employment in the labour market. During pilot testing, co-operation was established and validated with labour offices and other organisations which contribute to work rehabilitation. It is an important fact relating to the project that this co-operation did not end with the termination of the pilot trial, but that in many regions it is continuing and developing even further.

2) How is the public responding to the outputs of your project?

For the success of the project and for it to reach its objectives, it is important that the public is interested in our outputs and that it continues to work with them. The project therefore puts a lot of emphasis on disseminating outputs via seminars for labour offices and social partners throughout the whole Czech Republic, as well as on the fact that it works closely with Employment Services Administration at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. Our experience is that the public is very interested in our outputs and that their response has been positive.

3) Where do you see your products 3 years from now?

In view of the fact that the project has managed to set up co-operation networks in regions where pilot testing was carried out, it is important to us that this system be extended to the other regions of the Czech Republic as well, and that in this way there can be more effective use made of the tools for work rehabilitation than has been the case until now. Co-operation with Employment Services Administration at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic has been of great benefit in region-wide dissemination and implementation of our outputs into the system for work rehabilitation at all labour offices.

Interesting facts about the projects

- Czech Television broadcast a report in their programme “I’m unemployed” on a project run by the beneficiary Slezská Diakonie which is aimed at helping the homeless. There is a link to this report on the website www.equalcr.cz.
- In Ústí nad Labem, there was a conference organised by the beneficiary Nový Prostor on the subject “Can social companies prosper?”. Successful models of social enterprise in several European countries were presented at the event. Further information is available at www.socialni-ekonomika.cz.
- The Association for Probation and Mediation in the Justice System has published a short guide for employers who are preparing to employ persons who have served their sentence after a criminal conviction. More details are available at <http://equal.spj.cz/Index.php?hdr=emp&cnt=pkg&>.
- The beneficiary civic association Slovo 21 released a press release on the performance of its project “Support for Roma in Prague”. By 1 March 2008, a total of 1406 clients had passed through the project and at that date 299 had been employed, re-qualified or accepted into secondary or higher education.
- The beneficiary Expertis, which runs a project entitled Third Career, held a conference in Brno called “Age as an opportunity – let’s use the potential of employees who are 50+” on 13 April. It was also possible to watch the conference online via an internet broadcast.

Mainstreaming and National Thematic Networks

Vertical mainstreaming

Roughly 30 development partnerships have approached the Managing Authority with requests for support to mainstream their innovative products on national level (so called “vertical mainstreaming”). For development partnerships, which are often

formed from not-for-profit organisations, civic associations or small private-sector companies, it can be much more difficult to make contact with policy makers who would be able to support the system changes essential for rolling out the products they have developed into widespread use. Therefore, through overall co-ordina-

tion by the Managing Authority, policy makers will be approached in a more effective way than via individual lines of communication on a project-by-project basis. Projects identified suitable products for vertical mainstreaming and prepared materials about them. The Managing Authority then contacted the relevant bodies with

requests to study the enclosed materials and return their responses on these products. Amongst the bodies approached were, for example, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic, the Ministry for Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, as well as labour offices and regional authorities. The responses of these institutions and organisations are currently being evaluated.

The selection of EQUAL products for the European database

The Managing Authority finally chose 10 products from Czech development partnerships for the database of European Commission of EQUAL products to be shared on EU level which is available at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm. Amongst other factors, the criteria for selection took into account the quality of the product (if it had been validated or otherwise evaluated) and transferability or potential interest in the product in other countries. The following products were selected:

- SONS ČR – product: Methodology materials “Supported employment for people with impaired vision”
- Troas – product: “Educating deaf and hard-of-hearing people in computer graphics with the aim of increasing their employability on the labour market”
- Re-qualification and information centre – product: “Help Desk”
- Fokus Praha – product: “Social company model”
- Kazuist – product: “Social Observatory (supporting tourism for persons with disability)”
- RPiC-ViP – product: “Set of programmes to develop 14 key competences for the labour market and a system for preparing certified skills trainers”
- Labour Office Semily – product: “Know-how and management of a functional local partnership (not only in the area of life-long learning in rural areas)”
- Centre for visualisation and interactive education – product: “On-line Centre for sign language interpretation”, and the product: “Training programmes for drama education for the hard-of-hearing”
- Gender Studies – product: “Equal Chances as a Competitive Advantage HANDBOOK: Employers’ Attitudes to Equal Opportunities Policies for Women and Men”

Evaluating the work of National Thematic Network C – Strengthening social economics, particularly community services

The mechanism of the CIP EQUAL National Thematic Networks has become very beneficial for the work of NTN C and has enabled the development of social economics in the Czech Republic. The first step was to establish a well-balanced NTN C team – in addition to representatives of development partnerships formed from civic associations, private-sector companies and co-operatives, the members also include three experts and representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and various labour offices. The NTN C environment enabled information to be exchanged between individual projects in a standard way. The group as a whole, however, mainly focused on more general issues such as mainstreaming and discussing or defining new concepts for social economics.

Looking back, it is now possible to state that certain products did not take hold, whereas other became the centre of attention of group work. The initial division of the members of NTN C into three working groups was disappointing. The later formation of another working group, however, proved to be a success, as well as an independent new website www.socialni-ekonomika.cz. This was set up as part of one of the projects, but has become a platform for sharing information which will outlive the life span of CIP EQUAL.

Social economics is an innovative issue with very good prospects in the Czech Republic. Most of the development activities relating to social enterprise in this country have now become concentrated together through NTN C. Representatives of academic circles are frequently invited to join in the work of the group, as group members try to create shared platforms. Twice there have been regional meetings connected with the functioning of social companies (in Odry and Třinec).

One of the most major issues for NTN C is the promotion of social economics at a national level and mainstreaming strategy is at the centre of members’ attention. The first stage of mainstreaming occurred with the acceptance of social economics issues into documents of the 2007–2013 structural funds programme period. Social economics appeared in the National Strategic Development Plan, in the Operational Programme

Human Resources and Employment (OP HRE), in the Integrated Operational Programme (IOP) and in the Operational Programme Prague – Adaptability. Within the OP HRE and the IOP programmes, a special grant scheme has been prepared to support the founding of new social enterprises. This concept of a global grant was presented by employees of the Social Services Section of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs at the regional meeting of NTN C in Třinec and members of NTN C were able to provide them with feedback. Social economics did not, however, become part of the Regional Operational Programmes, despite the creation of a process to promote it at the regional level. A further major task was to search for definitions of terms and formulate a Czech understanding of social economics. With this purpose in mind, the National Expert Network for Social Economics Work (NENSEW) was formed, consisting of a number of NTN C members together with invited experts, who were mainly from academic circles. NENSEW has drawn up principles and standards for social companies and its outputs were approved at the March meeting of NTN C, where a new mainstreaming strategy was also approved to promote social economics further in the Czech Republic.

The way that NTN C has worked could be said to be a model example of good practice in utilising the potential of CIP EQUAL. It provided common ground for a platform for those who are concerned with social economics in the Czech Republic; there were successes in including this issue in new operational programmes; and a basis for a Czech understanding of social economics was also formed through developing a consensus view. All of this will continue even after the termination of CIP EQUAL. Social enterprise has in the meantime become attractive for many organisations and a new platform for shared work will try to integrate all these newly created streams.

Petra Francová,
long-term expert

EQUAL in Europe

International meeting of the communication platform – innovation and mainstreaming, Warsaw

On 4 April 2008, there was a meeting in Warsaw of the EQUAL international communication platform which focused on sharing experiences in the field of innovation and mainstreaming. This platform is managed by the Managing Authority of CIP EQUAL Portugal, in co-operation with Poland and Spain. The main part of this meeting consisted of 4 workshops concentrating on various aspects of this issue: (1) validating innovative products, (2) promoting (mainstreaming) innovations, (3) building innovative potential – creating networks and communications platforms, (4) selecting and evaluating innovations. During the first workshop, participants were presented with a methodology for the validation of innovative products (meaning to assess their quality, added value and defensibility), which was created by the

Managing Authority of CIP EQUAL Portugal. First of all, Maria do Carmo Nunes from Portugal described the methodology in detail and, after this, presentations were made concerning Belgium (French speaking) and the Czech Republic, which had adopted this methodology, modified it to their own conditions of management under the EQUAL programme and used it in practice. The Czech experience of it was presented by Renáta Haroková of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. Those making presentations touched on the challenges of the methodology, its credibility, the importance of communication between all the participants of validation proceedings, as well as on the importance of feedback gained by participants of validation in order to finalise their products. Renáta Haroková also

focused on the new programme period 2007–2013 and the possibility of using this methodology. During discussion, she presented questions of the obligation of its use in innovative projects, on using all or only part of the approach, and of exercising selection criteria that take future validation into account.

As representatives of other active international EQUAL platforms had also been invited to the seminar, time was made during the plenary session for them to introduce themselves. Discussion then took place on tasks for the future and on possibilities for co-operation and co-ordination.

It is possible to join in on further discussions or on platforms themselves at the internet address <http://innovation.esflive.eu/user>.

9

European social fund 2007–2013

Further calls for the Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, which is responsible for drawing on funds available from the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment (OP HRE), is announcing further calls to submit applications for financial support. The first call to submit applications for financial support from ESF through OP HRE was announced in February 2008, regarding submission of applications for implementing grant-based projects under Priority Axis 1 Adaptability “Strengthening social dialogue and building the capacity of social partners”. Further calls which have already been made concern individual projects under Priority Axis 2 Active Labour Market Policies and 3 Social Integration and Equal Opportunities. On 15 May, a call was announced for Priority Axis 5 International Co-operation. Parties interested in implementing projects in the field of International Co-operation will be able to submit their applications from 15 May, with the first deadline for submission of applications for this ongoing call on 15 August 2008. The three main themes of this call are innovative projects, development of partnerships and thematic groups and mobility. In June, applicants can expect further calls for Priority Axis 1 Adaptability and Priority Axis 3 Social Integration and

Equal Opportunities. Basic information on individual Priority Axes is given in the OP HRE Implementation Document. Types of activity which can be supported and the kinds of target group these activities can be aimed towards are outlined in each particular call.

All calls are published on the website www.esfcr.cz, where calls for grant-based and individual projects are classified accordingly. Distinction is also made between calls which are ongoing, and those which are closed. In the case of a closed call, projects are submitted up to the date set for this, and in the case of an ongoing call, projects are accepted at any point after the announcement has been made until the available funds have been exhausted.

Entities involved in the implementation structures of operational programmes, such as managing authorities, intermediary entities and entities connected to the public sector budget (for example, specialist sections of individual ministries, regions, etc.) can be implementers of individual projects. Other applicants fall within the competence of implementers of grant-based projects.

After the announcement of a call, both legal and natural entities with their registered address (or residence) in the Czech Republic can apply for financial support

from OP HRE. Applications must be made by the entities directly responsible for development and management of the project, and not by an intermediary. In the case that an applicant has its registered address in Prague, it has to show that its project is focused on a target group which is eligible within the framework of OP HRE. More detailed information can be found in the Applicants Handbook (one of the handbooks of the “OP HRE Ten Commandments”) and the OP HRE Implementation Document.

The “OP HRE Ten Commandments” came into being at the same time as preparations were being made for the first calls. These are ten handbooks with guidelines for the 2007–2013 programme period, which govern the process for applicants and beneficiaries of funding support from OP HRE. Amongst the OP HRE Ten Commandments are a Handbook for Applicants for Financial Support from OP HRE, as well as 8 shorter related handbooks which guide interested parties through the individual themes connected with preparing and implementing projects.

More information about OP HRE and the documents mentioned here (the OP HRE Ten Commandments, OP HRE Implementation Document) can be found on the website www.esfcr.cz.