

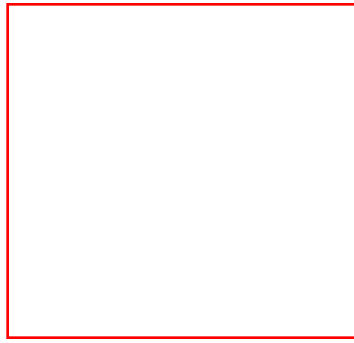
EQUAL

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First DRAFT

WALES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN





20 DECEMBER 2000

EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

WALES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 This document is the plan for implementing the EQUAL Community Initiative in Wales. EQUAL will cover the whole of Wales and will be supported through the European Social Fund. The initiative will test and promote new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market, both for those in work and those seeking work, through transnational co-operation. It will also include action to help the social and vocational integration of Asylum Seekers/Refugees. Wales will receive Euro [XX m], from within the UK allocation for EQUAL, over the period 2000-2006. A further Euro [XX m] of public sector expenditure will match this, bringing the total investment in EQUAL in Wales to Euro [XX m].

1.2 The Wales EQUAL Implementation Plan will operate within the framework of the GB EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) *agreed* between the UK Government and the Commission and is subject to the agreement of the GB Monitoring Committee. It has been developed in consultation with the National Assembly for Wales Economic Development and Equal Opportunities Committees, the equality commissions in Wales and a wide range of partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

1.3 The Plan provides an overview of the labour market and policy context in Wales and identifies the priorities for EQUAL. It also explains how the initiative will be implemented in Wales, including the role of the Wales Management Committee (WMC), the arrangements for Development Partnerships, the selection of projects, dissemination of outcomes and the financial and administrative arrangements.

1.4 The EQUAL initiative is not intended to support mainstream delivery of employment programmes. It has been designed to help us to explore new ways of tackling all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market and social exclusion. It will have a particular emphasis on combating discrimination and inequalities based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. EQUAL is distinguished from the new Objective 1,2 and 3 Structural Fund programmes by the following main features:

- its thematic approach to testing new ways of delivering policy priorities within the framework of the European Employment Strategy;
- the emphasis on transnational co-operation, learning from and sharing lessons with other Member States;

- and the emphasis on dissemination and using the initiative to inform the development and implementation of policies, including incorporating successful innovation into mainstream Structural Fund programmes and the National Action Plan for Employment.

1.5 In accordance with the GB CIP, EQUAL in Wales will operate in eight thematic fields. Seven of these are defined in the context of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy (ie. Employability; Entrepreneurship; Adaptability; and Equal Opportunities) and the eighth covers the specific needs of Asylum Seekers/Refugees. The eight thematic fields are:

Employability

A Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all

B Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market

Entrepreneurship

C Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas

D Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs

Adaptability

E Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market

F Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies

Equal Opportunities for women and men

H Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation.

Asylum Seekers/Refugees

I Helping the integration of asylum seekers/refugees.

Details of the priorities for EQUAL in Wales under each of these thematic fields are provided in Chapter 4.

1.6 EQUAL will operate by bringing together the key players in a geographical area or sector into Development Partnerships (DPs). DPs will choose one of the thematic areas and agree a strategy within which they will try out new ways of dealing with problems of discrimination and inequality which they have already pinpointed. Central to the work of each DP will be its links with at least one partnership from another country (another Member State and possibly non-Member States as appropriate) and its involvement in a network of others dealing with the same theme across Europe. The new ideas will be tested with a view to using the results to influence the design of future policy and practice. DPs will also participate in the dissemination and mainstreaming of good practice.

1.7 Development Partnerships will be selected for EQUAL funding following national calls for proposals.

1.8 EQUAL will fund activity under the following four actions within each thematic field:

- Action 1: setting up Development Partnerships and transnational co-operation - 5% of the budget
- Action 2: implementing the work programmes of the Development Partnerships - 75% of the budget
- Action 3: thematic networking, dissemination of good practice and making an impact on national policy - 15% of the budget
- Action 4: Technical Assistance to support actions 1, 2 and 3 - 5% of the budget.

Actions 1 and 2 are sequential. Member States will be expected to be in a position to start Action 3 at the earliest point that results are available to disseminate. Action 4 will provide support from before the commencement of Action 1.