



EUROPEAN POLICY FORUM

MINIMUM STANDARDS AND BEYOND

-THE CONTRIBUTION OF EQUAL TO A DIGNIFIED STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

MALMÖ, SWEDEN. 2007.05.22 TO 2007.05.24

European Policy Forum has been organised by the Swedish ESF-Council, the Swedish National Thematic Network on Asylum and the city of Malmö. Below we present the complete programme. The seminars and workshops are structured in three different themes that you follow throughout the forum.



2007.05.22-2007.05.24

PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 22 MAY 2007

19.00 – 22.00

Opening of Showcasing Exhibition and informal buffet dinner

Opening of the Showcasing Exhibition with Member State stands presenting national EQUAL good practices, including entertainment and buffet dinner.

Entertainment by:

- Zinat Al Sadat Pirzadeh comedienne
- Vocal Six, music and more. www.vocalsix.com

Speakers:

- Anne-Marie Qvarfort, Director General, Swedish ESF-Council

WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 2007

9.00 – 12.00

Opening Plenary Session

Welcome, presentations and debate to help map the context of asylum policy, covering:

- Asylum and refugees – the Swedish approach
- Asylum policy in Europe since 1995: achievements and future challenges
- The Reception Directive – progress and impact evaluation
- The European Social Fund and EQUAL - social inclusion and reception

Facilitator: Göran Rosenberg

10.30–11.00 Coffee break

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 17.30
Seminars and workshops – Part 1: study visits and learning seminar

THEME 1 ADVICE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	THEME 2 EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYER RELATIONS	THEME 3 CAPACITY BUILDING
Study visit to Danish Red Cross in Copenhagen. The study visit consists of three onsite workshops organised by the Want2Work Development Partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning processes under extreme conditions• Media training and the New Times Magazine• Skills assessments, CV development and external education	Study visit International Health Advisors The study visit consists of several presentations of the Health Advisors project which was funded by EQUAL Round 1 and has now been mainstreamed into several local health care practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concept, purpose and training provided.• The role of EQUAL• Example of health advising work• Visit to a health care centre• SAGA, a German Development Partnership developing the Language and Cultural Mediators job profile	Learning seminar Presentation of interesting national and transnational approaches which focused on capacity building <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving reception standards• ERF project assessing the quality of the reception process in Finland and developing a quality management system• Skills audit: a useful tool to further integration• Transnational cooperation: a burden or an opportunity?

19.15 Gathering at Stortorget, Malmö. (Buses depart from each hotel, check for times in the reception.)
20.00 Official conference dinner hosted by the City of Malmö. (Walking distance from Stortorget.)

DETAILED STUDY VISIT AND LEARNING SEMINAR PROGRAMME

THEME 1 ADVICE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	THEME 2 EMPLOYMENT AND RELATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS	THEME 3 CAPACITY BUILDING
DAY 1 - STUDY VISITS AND LEARNING SEMINAR The Seminars will start with a relative 'informal' component, showing the participants a particular example on the ground in the thematic area of their choice. Participants will listen to short presentations, participate in workshops and courses that were provided to asylum seekers, get to meet beneficiaries and their teachers, employers and other project partners that were involved. The visits are highly interactive, fully engaging the participants in the practices of the Development Partnership. For Theme 3 – Capacity building, a session will be organised in the conference centre with presentations of relevant research, examples of transnational cooperation and DVDs promoting EQUAL partnerships and asylum issues in general.		
13.30 – 18.15 Study visit to Danish Red Cross in Copenhagen. The study visit consists of three onsite workshops organised by the Want2Work Development Partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning processes under extreme conditions Language training, workshops (computer, sewing, handicrafts, etc) for traumatised families, skills assessments, socio-psychological support and social activities• Media training and the New Times Magazine Media training course with participants / journalists developing the New Times magazine, a bi-monthly magazine on asylum and refugee issues distributed to ministries, libraries, other media and NGOs.• Skills assessments, CV development and external education Two major activities developed by the Culture House: the skills assessment tool and the ECDL (European Computer Drivers Licence) course adapted to the needs of asylum seekers. The visit will include an introduction to the Culture House, an ECDL workshop, CV development workshop and a visit to the Copenhagen International Hairdressers School where a group of asylum seekers is following the education as a result of the skills assessment and the CV development workshop.	13.30 – 17.30 Study visit International Health Advisors The study visit consists of several presentations of the Health Advisors project which was funded by EQUAL Round 1 and has now been mainstreamed into several local health care practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation of International Health Advisors Setting out the concept, purpose and training provided.• The role of EQUAL The concept of the project already existed before EQUAL, but thanks to the EU funding it was possible to expand the activities and to help asylum seekers to access employment.• An example of health advising work• Making use of immigrants existing skills in medicine• Visit to a health care centre Why implement the International Health Advisor activities in regular healthcare services and procedures?• Short presentation of the German DP SAGA, which created a similar job profile of Language and Cultural Mediators and Bridge, which is successfully cooperating with a major health service provider in Berlin.	13.30 – 17.00 Learning seminar in the Europaporten centre Focused on capacity building in terms of improving organisational practices, addressing quality standards and developing new tools that can improve the services provided to asylum seekers. EQUAL's unique aspect, namely its requirement to implement Transnational Partnerships, will also be presented. The presentations of this session will be rotated once. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving reception standards ERF project assessing the quality of the reception process in Finland and developing a quality management system.• Skills audit: a useful tool to further integration Several EQUAL partnerships developed skills assessment tools for asylum seekers. Under Round 1 of EQUAL a special Working Group was established to compare the different tools. Their findings were collected in a guide which has been used by many Round 2 DPs• Transnational cooperation: a burden or an opportunity? The Alliance Transnational Partnership develops various interesting products, such as a handbook for self-employment for returnees and a manual for language education. In cooperation with other EQUAL partnerships, Alliance is planning a large-scale mainstreaming conference in the European Parliament in September 2007.

THURSDAY 24 MAY 2007

9.00 – 10.00
Seminars and workshops – Part 2: Seminars to set the scene
The seminars will include short presentations and debate on the thematic priorities of EQUAL, covering:

- EQUAL lessons and links to the Reception Directive
- A national example of going beyond the minimum standards of the Reception Directive

THEME 1 ADVICE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	THEME 2 EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYER RELATIONS	THEME 3 CAPACITY BUILDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EQUAL lessons in Advice, Education and Training and links to the relevant provisions in the Reception Directive• National example: The Spanish approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EQUAL lessons in Employment and employer relations and links to the relevant provisions in the Reception Directive• National example: The Austrian approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EQUAL lessons in Capacity building and links to the provisions in the Reception Directive to better host and integrate asylum seekers in the Member States• National example: The Italian approach

10.00–10.30 Coffee break

10.30 – 12.00
Seminars and workshops – Part 3: Interactive workshops
The workshops divide the seminar participants up into smaller groups. They will comprise:

- Testimonials of good practice by Development Partnerships
- Interactive discussions on how to transfer these

THEME 1 ADVICE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	THEME 2 EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYER RELATIONS	THEME 3 CAPACITY BUILDING
<div>Session 1.1 Asylum Seekers Partnership (MT) Integrated packages combining socio-psychological support, guidance, language acquisition and labour market orientation.</div> <div>Equality and Solidarity for Asylum Seekers (CY) Integrated pathways combining education, training and work placements.</div>	<div>Session 2.1 TransKom (DE) New employment profile of Language and Culture Mediators.</div> <div>A Save Haven Hamburg (DE) Vocational programmes and in-company training which take account of the labour market needs.</div>	<div>Session 3.1 Becoming More Visible Training of people working in a professional capacity with asylum seekers.</div> <div>EASI (UK) RAGU (Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit) involves beneficiaries in the design of services, so that the latter are targeted and meet the needs of users.</div>
<div>Session 1.2 VIAAS (PT) Reception and culture centre for asylum seekers and the local community</div> <div>Esely (HU) Training asylum seekers through volunteering placements in the regional job centre.</div>	<div>Session 2.2 Human step (CZ) Creation of an employment agency matching asylum seekers with job offers, including accompanied visits to the employer.</div> <div>IntegRARsi (IT) Work experiences of asylum seekers in public and private employers such as IKEA</div>	<div>Session 3.2 Using on-the-ground practices to inform policy development Session for policy and decision makers, focusing on ways to improve the links between grass-root and political actors to ensure evidence-based policy making. Examples which will be presented include: UK NGOs changing a new national policy refraining asylum seekers from learning English. Swedish Liberal Party including tips from Swedish NTN in their programme.</div>

12.00 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 15.00
Closing Plenary Session
Presentations of workshop conclusions and panel discussion to highlight the messages that emerged from the seminars and workshops, discuss the transferability of the good practices in the EQUAL Asylum Seekers theme and their link to the Reception Directive. Questions addressed will include:

- How to ensure that the good practices are transferred into policy-making and legislating?
- What next? What resources are available to help asylum seekers integrate?
- Future EU policy development? What is happening with the Common European Asylum System? What other policies may take asylum seekers into account?
- Equality for all? Why are asylum seekers not visible in many relevant initiatives such as the European Year of Equal Opportunities, social inclusion process, etc?

Facilitator: Göran Rosenberg

Panellists / speakers:

- Jean-Louis De Brouwer, European Commission, Dir. of Immigration, Asylum and Borders, DG Justice, Freedom and Security
- Karl Kopp, Pro Asyl
- Peo Hansen, Researcher
- Anita Gradin, former Commissioner for Asylum issues in the European Commission.
- Jan Andersson, Member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the Committee of Employment and social affairs. Also member of the board of the Swedish ESF council.

DETAILED SEMINAR AND WORKSHOP OUTLINE

THEME 1 ADVICE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	THEME 2 EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYER RELATIONS	THEME 3 CAPACITY BUILDING
DAY 2 – SETTING THE SCENE SEMINARS The purpose of the Setting the scene seminars is to allow participants to truly 'emerge' in the theme they have chosen to follow. The Seminars will include two short presentations questions and comments from the floor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first presentation will provide an overview of the key lessons emerging from EQUAL and their links to the relevant articles of the Reception Directive • The second presentation will provide a national example of going beyond the minimum standards of the Reception Directive. <p>One facilitator per seminar will introduce the speakers, coordinate the debate and take questions and comments from the floor.</p>		
9.00 – 10.00 1. EQUAL lessons in Advice, Education and Training and links to the relevant provisions in the Reception Directive Overview of the main lessons and policy messages emerging from EQUAL as whole in the thematic area. The basis for this presentation is the relevant Policy brief. Overview of access to education and training of asylum seekers in the Member States. 2. National example of going beyond the minimum standards of the Reception Directive – Spain Presentation of the changes made to national legislation to speed up asylum seeker access to the labour market and the various educational and vocational measures that have been launched at national level to get them into employment.	9.00 – 10.00 1. EQUAL lessons in Employment and employer relations and links to the relevant provisions in the Reception Directive Overview of the main lessons and policy messages emerging from EQUAL as whole in the thematic area. The basis for this presentation is the relevant Policy brief. Overview of access to employment of asylum seekers in the Member States. 2. National example of going beyond the minimum standards of the Reception Directive – Austria Several regions and organisations in Austria have been piloting a new concept, entitled "Gemeinnützige Beschäftigung" (employment useful to the community) adopted by the government in 2005 to help asylum seekers to access the labour market.	9.00 – 10.00 1. EQUAL lessons in Capacity building and links to the provisions in the Reception Directive to better host and integrate asylum seekers in the Member States Overview of the main lessons and policy messages emerging from EQUAL as whole in the thematic area. The basis for this presentation is the relevant Policy brief. Overview of how the various provisions related to the Reception Directive in relation to capacity building have been implemented in the Member States. 2. National example of going beyond the minimum standards of the Reception Directive – Italy The Reception Directive requires a higher level of coordination and organisation between different actors and stakeholder working with asylum seekers. Italy, which a few years back had a relatively underdeveloped national reception system, has placed substantial efforts on implementing the minimum standards of the Reception Directive. With the support of EU funding such as EQUAL and the European Refugee Fund, a National Asylum Programme was developed, supporting the reception and integration of asylum seekers throughout the territory.

DETAILED SEMINAR AND WORKSHOP OUTLINE

THEME 1 ADVICE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	THEME 2 EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYER RELATIONS	THEME 3 CAPACITY BUILDING
DAY 2 – INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS The workshops will start with one or two testimonials of a good practice, showing the example from three different perspectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A beneficiary • A practitioner • A policy / decision-maker or another stakeholder who helped to spread the practice <p>The participants will then be invited to form small groups to discuss the following three main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would a similar approach work in my context? • What would be the basic conditions for organising a similar practice in my context • What would be my sales-pitch to policy-and decision-makers to convince them to join in the development of the practice? How would I promote the practice once it is being developed? <p>One of the Theme 3 (Capacity building) sessions, workshop 3.2, is slightly different as it will present and discuss successful cases where EQUAL (small-scale) practices and experiences, or developments linked to EQUAL, helped to inform, influence or change policies. The workshop will aim to involve policy and decision makers in a debate on how to ensure better links between grass-root experiences and policy-making in general.</p> <p>Two facilitators per workshop will introduce the speakers and ensure a lively debate. Towards the end of each workshop session, participants will be invited to formulate one recommendation to inform the Closing Plenary Session.</p>		
10.30 – 12.00 Session 1.1 Asylum Seekers Partnership (MT) Integrated packages combining socio-psychological support, language acquisition and labour market orientation. A small vocational guidance team of experienced social workers have accompanied the asylum seekers who joined the newly established courses from beginning to end. Equality and Solidarity for Asylum Seekers (CY) Integrated pathways combining Cypriot and European cultural orientation, language education, vocational training and work placements of two to four months. Due to a shortage of chef assistants, air conditioning and refrigeration assistant technicians; and secretarial assistants in the Cypriot labour force, the programme trains asylum seekers to fill these positions. ▶	10.30 – 12.00 Session 2.1 TransKom (DE) New employment profiles The new profile of Language and Culture Mediators, with 27 asylum seekers certified under Round 1 and 65 taking part in the courses under Round 2. A Save Haven Hamburg (DE) Vocational programmes and in-company training which take account of the labour market needs, enabling asylum seekers to find employment despite existing legal restrictions (they can only access certain jobs when no German / EU citizens can be found). At the start of 2007 more than 80 commercial companies in Hamburg were training asylum seekers and/ refugees in work placements. ▶	10.30 – 12.00 Session 3.1 Becoming More Visible The EQUAL partnership developed, in collaboration with the University of Joensuu, a supplementary study programme for staff working in the 13 reception centres across Finland. The programme was attended by 38 students. A second course has been ordered by the reception centres, to run in 2008. EASI (UK) EASI regularly consults the Advisory Group of asylum seekers which was set up at the start of the EQUAL partnership. The main purpose of the Advisory Group on asylum seekers is to involve beneficiary representatives in the design of EQUAL services, so that they are targeted and appropriately meet the needs of the users. The Group is also designed to empower asylum seekers, develop their skills and involve them in the workings of the Partnership. ▶

► Session 1.2

VIAAS (PT)

Development of a reception and cultural centre, creating a place where asylum seekers and Portuguese citizens get to naturally whilst enjoying leisure activities. The centre provides a new venue for hosting bands and theatre groups, a day care centre for children, a public garden and sports facilities.

Esely (HU)

The project joined hands with the regional job centre of Debrecen, turning it into the first employment agency to recruit asylum seekers as volunteers. With the assistance of a social worker, four asylum seekers were appointed and selected according to their skills, training needs and interests.

► Session 2.2

Human step (CZ)

Creation of an employment agency matching asylum seekers with job offers, including accompanied visits to the employer.

The project approached potential employers including large companies in, for example, the automobile, brewery, porcelain and aerospace and transportation industries.

IntegRARsi (IT)

The project has successfully managed to engage both public and private employers the provision of work placements for asylum seekers. One of these employers was IKEA, which hired a group of newcomers whom in 2007 are still working in their shops in Italy.

► Session 3.2

Using on-the-ground practices to inform policy development

Session for policy and decision makers, focusing on ways to improve the links between grass-root practices and political actors to ensure evidence-based policy making.

The participants will be confronted with several interesting practices and will be invited to discuss what organisational, political and perhaps legislative changes would be required to mainstream these.

This Policy Forum has been organised by the Swedish ESF Council, the Swedish National Thematic Network on Asylum and the city of Malmö, with the support of the European Commission. We would like to especially thank the Working Group established to support the organisation of the event, comprising representatives of the Managing Authorities and/or National Support Structures from Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy and Poland, DG Justice, Freedom and Security and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.



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