

ASSET UK LEARNING FROM TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGES



Asset UK and want2work Report on Transnational Co-operation Agreement.



ASSET UK- Want2Work Report on TCA

Title of the Transnational co-operation partnership; To work or not to work?

Partners

UK-Great Britain: ID- UKgb-62
ASSET UK; British Refugee Council (BRC)

Denmark ID DK-21
Want2Work; Dansk Røde Kors Asylafdeling /Danish Red Cross

Planned Activity of the TCA

A. Rationale and Objectives

1. Common interests/methodology/underlying problem

Common interests

The general aim of the two DPs was to improve the conditions for asylum seekers, to ensure a smoother integration process for those who received a residence permit or leave to remain, and a better position for those who were ultimately rejected

Both projects aimed to explore the possibilities for facilitating asylum seekers' access to the labour market and / or for maintaining and improving their individual skills and competencies during the asylum procedure.

Both partnerships were national projects aiming at developing an improved national programme for their asylum seekers.

Both national systems sought to look at the need to recognise a continuum between asylum seeking and eventual integration or return, while recognising the differences implicit in that process.

The Danish government had for several years funded integration programmes with entitlements for individual refugees via their municipalities, whereas UK had only recently embarked on an integration strategy, less well funded and mainly implemented through strengthening the organisations established to assist refugees.

Both countries had a system of dispersal across their national territory although in the UK this was specifically for asylum seekers and in Denmark it was also for refugees during their 3-year integration period.

Whereas Denmark is very experienced in working within accommodation centres the UK expected to be moving towards that model during 2002-3, although this did not eventually happen.

Whereas the Danish model had hitherto focused more on internal work within accommodation centres (including some language instruction) which would be of particular interest to BRC and partners in the UK, the UK had considerable relevant experience of working with asylum seekers within the wider community.

In the context of then current EU debates, the UK had had experience over several years of permitting asylum seekers to work, although this permission was terminated shortly after Action 2 began whereas the Danish government as yet had not permitted this. However, there was a government proposal to grant expert asylum seekers work permits

during the asylum procedure. This was implemented. Furthermore, in Autumn 2002 the government proposed a new law on integration in Denmark, which was expected to include an even wider access for asylum seekers to the labour market, although this did not happen.

In both countries there was significant work to be done with employers in both the public and private sector, not least in terms of developing diversity management; whereas the UK may have had more years of experience in relation to race discrimination issues Denmark may have had more experience in relation to gender equality in particular

Both DPs were led by NGOs and had partners representing other NGOs working in the refugee or ethnic community field, local authorities, professional education / training organisations and, in different ways, worked closely with their government programmes in support of asylum seekers. The Danish DP also included employer's organisations and trade unions.

Methodology

Both DPs were large national projects working towards an improved process for asylum seekers via regional initiatives.

Underlying problems at the start of the programme

Refugees suffer serious problems of unemployment and underemployment in both countries, whereas asylum seekers in Denmark and the UK also lack access to the labour market. Both DPs / countries share common underlying problems relating to the basic antipathy to asylum seekers within the broad public perception; there may be a need for the EU to fill skills gaps or labour shortages, but asylum seekers are rarely seen as part (albeit a small part) of a possible solution; there is little hard evidence to date about the level of skills and experience, or about the possible contribution that asylum seekers who do eventually stay in the territory, may bring with them; there is a need to share experience about the methodologies of approach to asylum seekers with reference to their preparation for the labour market, to their own personal competencies (basic skills, host language acquisition, training, recognition of previous experiences and qualifications etc.), and their own ability to function independently, whatever the result of their asylum application

Work Programme & Working Methodology

1. Transnational activities that were foreseen

a. Typology of activities

The process as set up in the TCA was effectively followed, with the same level of attention to priorities as expected

Exchange of information and experiences

Parallel development of innovative approaches

Import, export or adoption of new approaches

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Joint development

Exchange of trainees/ trainers/staff

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b. Overall transnational strategy

The quality and relevance of the activities was ensured by involving the relevant actors at the appropriate stages of the co-operation, for example:

-employers and trade unions; in particular in Denmark there was access to Danish strategic partners from an employers and union background. It was a significant strength of the Danish partnership that they had the involvement of such organisations as the Danish Confederation of Industries, Confederation of Danish municipalities, Danish Food and Allied Workers Union, Copenhagen Municipality, New Danes, POEM, AMU International.

-relevant NGOs; although the Danish Red Cross had a monopoly of provision for asylum seekers in the country, the diversity of UK provision by NGOs was a source of strength and interest within the TCA partnership. The facilities offered by the Danish Red Cross Culture House was an important feature of their work; most transnational visits were centred there.

- education and training providers; the UK partnership included significant national education providers who were not specialist providers of education for asylum seekers including the London South Bank University (LLU+), National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Basic Skills Agency, Sheffield College whereas most of the Danish educational provision was limited to provision by the Red Cross staff and volunteers
 - local and regional authorities; both countries have their own model of a dispersal system which in some way involved municipalities and regional organisations
- asylum seekers and refugees: both partners were able to involve asylum seekers and former refugees in the work of the TCA within the constraints set by asylum seekers' travelling restrictions.

The exchange of information within the transnational co-operation was ensured and maintained by:

- regular meetings of the transnational coordinators;
- arranging working seminars and arranging regular study visits;
- attendance and participation in external or other EQUAL conferences or events.

c. Description of the activities/tasks

Name of the activity

1. Transnational conferences

There was a plenary TCA partners' meeting in November 2002 in Copenhagen; and a closing meeting in Copenhagen in January 2005.

There was one major event in Birmingham, UK entitled 'Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees; an EQUAL Transnational Conference on 15-17 June 2003,' where the work undertaken by then was assessed and future plans reviewed. This event also ensured that the work of the various task groups came together more holistically.

2. Transnational co-ordination

The transnational co-ordinators planned to meet face to face at least twice per year throughout the 3 years (alternating between the UK & Denmark), first to establish terms of reference and to confirm work programme details, and later to review ongoing activities and to make the necessary revisions to the work programme for future activities. Of particular importance for the revision of the work programme was the partnership

conference held in Birmingham in June 2003. The transnational co-ordinators jointly were responsible for managing the work programme and resources required for transnational work. For this regular contact was maintained between the two co-ordinators by email, and telephone and frequent meetings in the margins of other EQUAL activities, including ETG5 activities, as the transnational co-ordinators participated either in the ETG5 liaison group and /or the ETG5 working group on skills audit: this usually coincided with ETG5 steering group meetings. Some difficulty in planning activities was caused by the UK's mid term difficulties in securing match funding, by the severe reduction in numbers of asylum seekers in Denmark which affected their accommodation centres, their staff and co funding and a need to change the Danish Red Cross transnational co-ordinator mid-way through the partnership, for health reasons.

3. EU thematic networking

This formed part of both DP's work and in particular was informed by EQUAL study visits relating to the main EQUAL principles, as well as by the expert groups and task group based study visits. In addition to specific events and meetings, partners conducted ongoing exchanges of ideas and practice, experience etc, via email, telephone and the websites. Participants from both DPs participated in the ETG5 seminars that were organised by GHK for the Commission, on transnational working in Brussels in June 2003; on advice, education and training in Haarlem in November 2003; and on capacity building in Dublin in March 2004.

4. Information

Baseline information documenting both national situations with regard to barriers and opportunities to employment was prepared initially. Each partner published a newsletter ('Employment in Europe' [UK] –quarterly- and 'New Times' in Denmark - bi-monthly. These newsletters were regularly distributed to partners at national and regional level; as well, continuously updated websites [Want2Work and ASSET UK] contained news and links to partners homepages with transnational information and links. Europe-wide information about asylum seeker and employment issues was also disseminated in this way, and this included information exchange about integration issues relating to refugees and other migrants and newcomers. In 2002 copies were produced and disseminated in January, March, May, July and December. In 2003 copies of 'Employment in Europe' [UK] were produced and disseminated in March, August and November. In 2004 copies were disseminated in March, April, August and September. The DPs encouraged the sharing of information about other EQUAL DPs for asylum seekers, and about other EQUAL themes that had a relevance to asylum seekers. Partners produced information materials drawing on the respective strengths of the partners and have used this to add value to their dissemination and mainstreaming activities.

5. An expert group on skills audit

This consisted of ASSET UK partners [NIACE and NICEM] and Want2Work. This group mid way through the activity gradually transposed into a wider ETG5 skills audit working group

The expert group developed and documented best practice for skills audits of asylum seekers and explored new ways of working with employers on this issue, as well as exploring new media for the presentation of the skills and qualifications of the individual asylum seeker. This work was the main part of the TCA activities and has had the most impact in both countries

The following general lessons emerged from the joint work on skills audits

Some of these lessons and recommendations have been used by the ETG5 working group on skills audits and some have come from that group.

Successful audits require careful planning: skills audits could quite easily be an integrated process forming part of wider programmes that provide asylum-seekers with orientation support, counselling, education, training and access to work or work experiences and constitute an essential element in achieving their integration.

The TCA identified some common "key steps" for a successful audit process, namely:

- a selection of participants but only to ensure that they are motivated and willing to take part in an often lengthy exercise, not just to choose those with high qualifications;
- initial interviews - as a first introduction to skills audits, to understand the asylum-seeker's expectations, ambitions and background;
- the actual identification of 'soft' and 'hard' skills/qualifications/ competencies/work experience/ language comprehension;
- validation and "translation" of skills and qualifications into certificates valid in the host country;
- recording and presentation of a written portfolio or CV;
- matching options and opportunities with education/training systems and the very limited openings in the UK or DK labour market;
- follow-up of direct and indirect benefits, in addition to considering any costs and drawbacks.

Skills audits are cost effective

Skills audits are resource intensive but the benefits outweigh the costs. On average, EQUAL ETG5 partners estimated that costs for undertaking a skills audit ranged from 200–1, 000 euro per person -including material and human resources-, but the following costs could be reduced – e.g. for counselling, and reception and allowances when and if asylum-seekers became self-sufficient.

Asylum-seekers also benefited from intercultural learning, increasing awareness and understanding. The evidence clearly shows that the application of skills audits shortly upon arrival enabled host countries to benefit from the asylum-seeker becoming self-supporting in a legal way faster than might otherwise have been the case.

Skills audits increase motivation and integration

Skills audits made it possible for asylum seekers to focus on the future whilst they were waiting for the outcome of the asylum application. The individual case studies identified by ASSET UK and Want2Work the ETG5 Skills Audit guide demonstrated that:

- asylum-seekers regained confidence and were encouraged to develop new personal goals and missions;
- they were also able to begin appropriate professional training within a relatively short time period.

All this meant that the skills audit process helped both to reduce the dangers of inactivity and to support the integration and empowerment process.

Public awareness: the skills audit process is a good mediator between asylum-seekers and employers

Creating networks and partnerships involving private companies and employer organisations is key to a successful skills audit. Through the skills audit process, employers in both the UK and in Denmark:

- discovered often for the first time the benefits asylum-seekers could bring to their activities;
- were much more open to offering asylum-seekers work opportunities and (voluntary) job placements or work-shadowing; and
- were in some cases initially reluctant, but in the end offered asylum-seekers a job after their placement or, where this was not possible due to legislative restrictions, enthusiastically argued for an extension of the placement.

Skills audits enhance awareness and involvement

All TCA partners have suggested that skills audits have resulted in reduced racism and xenophobia in the local community because of the successful integration of even a few asylum seekers. There is no evidence of the provision of skills audits attracting 'bogus' asylum-seekers, although this could only be properly assessed once these tools are applied on a much larger scale than under the EQUAL programme. Organisations outside EQUAL, such as education and training institutes and referral agencies, have shown interest in these approaches and the potential to adapt them for other disadvantaged groups.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EU policy actors: European Commission, European Parliament and the UK government.

- The application of skills audits for asylum-seekers could form a practical component of the Common European Asylum System as part of the implementation of the Reception Directive.
- Skills audits for asylum-seekers work in different national and regional contexts across the EU and the value of the practice is already beginning to be recognised. ASSET UK and Want2Work through the TCA have played a key role in the ETG5 working group on skills audits, which has raised the issue as a key one including at the Warsaw conference in Feb 2005. This needs to continue to take place at EU25 level during Round 2 of EQUAL

National / regional /local authorities and employers

- The benefits of skills audits for asylum-seekers surely outweigh the costs. It is especially cost-effective to undertake skills-audits shortly after the arrival of the asylum-seeker in the host country following an application for asylum, as they ensure that human and financial resources are not wasted.
- The effectiveness of integrated programmes offered to asylum-seekers, providing a combination of language courses, educational/vocational training, introduction to the labour market and on-the-job training could be enhanced if skills audits were an integral part of them.
- Resources should be put in place to ensure that appropriate capacity exists to deliver skills audits.

The TCA partners continued to meet as a transnational activity according to the TCA plan but after 18 months most of the work was subsumed into bringing the findings into the ambit of other TCA skills-audit groups, through the creation of an ETG5 working group. ASSET UK and Want2Work continued to meet and work together but also played a key role in this working group which produced a guide "Skills Audits – The Basics: Working with Asylum Seekers". This outlined the skills-audit process for asylum seekers, building on aspects of the good practices and practical experiences of the TCA partnerships. The guide provided an overview of common steps for undertaking a skills audit, case studies [including from ASSET UK and Want2Work], practical advice for setting up skills audits, descriptions of and contact information for the specific DP and TCA projects. In addition, a

brochure, CD-ROM and other exhibition material was prepared by the group for the European Conference "Asylum Seekers in the EU: the Challenges of Integration" held in Dublin on 1st April 2004. ASSET UK and Want2Work contributed to the "policy brief " [The Right Opportunity for the Right Skills] prepared for the EQUAL Warsaw conference in Feb 2005; one of the implementing partners, Sue Waddington from NIACE / ASSET UK presented the work of the ETG5 skills audit working both in Dublin and in Warsaw. ETG5 dissemination on skills- audits needs to continue to take place at EU25 level during Round 2 of

Skills audits meeting dates

NIACE and Danish Red Cross transnational meeting, 26 –27 September 2002

Asset UK and Want2Work at Equal Transnational Conference (workshop on skills audits) in Copenhagen on 3 - 4 December 2002,

EQUAL Transnational Skills Audit Task Group Meeting, at NICEM Belfast 15-16th March 2003.

Designing Skills Audit Models for Asylum Seekers Conference, 8-9 May 2003 Bornholm, Denmark.

Skills audit transnational management meeting, Saturday 10th May 2003, Bornholm

Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, A EQUAL Transnational Conference (workshop on information online skills audits) in Birmingham, on 15-17 June 2003.

Skills audit transnational meeting at NICEM, Belfast, and March 15-16 2004

Skills Audit transnational Meeting 22 –23 September 2004 at NIACE Leicester.

ETG5: Sue Waddington from NIACE made presentations at the following conferences on behalf of the ETG5 working group on skills audits. These included significant input from the work of the TCA skills audit working group. Similarly, a major input of information and recommendations was included in the policy briefs that accompanied both events.

Dublin 1st April 2004, 'Asylum Seekers in the EU: the Challenges of Integration'

Warsaw 24 – 26 February 2005, EQUAL dissemination conference entitled 'The Free Movement of Good Ideas.'

5. Study visits

Working groups discussed and developed best practice within areas such as orientation, information, advice and guidance, language and basic skills, skills audits, volunteering and work with employers. As a result of the conference in Birmingham it was decided that there was special value in pursuing the areas of skills audits, language and basic skills and work with employers. Work on volunteering and on delivering Information, Advice and Guidance to asylum seekers was not followed up with after exploring areas of common interest during Year 1. All the study visits involved the participants discussing the implementation of the principles of the EQUAL initiative: equal opportunities issues; innovation; partnership; empowerment; mainstreaming and the added values of transnationality. These sometimes included relevant actors from outside the partnerships.

Task group exchanges on Language /basic skills:

Asset UK and Want2Work at Equal Transnational Conference (workshop on ESOL and basic skills) in Copenhagen on 3 - 4 December 2002.

Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, An EQUAL Transnational Conference (workshop on ESOL and basic skills) in Birmingham, on 15-17 June 2003.

Asset UK Meets Want2Work, an Equal Transnational ESOL Meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark 3-4 May 2004.

Danish Red Cross visit to Sheffield College 10 – 11 November 2004.

Transnational task group meeting with Refugee Council, BSA Sheffield College and LLU+ and Want2Work on 12 November 2004.

The following general lessons and recommendations emerged from the joint work on

ASSET UK Transnational visits lessons learnt.

ASSET UK to Copenhagen

- Looked at provision for asylum seekers.
- Visited provision of Danish and English classes
- Met teachers, organisers and discussed issues around the provision in Denmark
- Met and talked to learners about their experiences in Denmark

Want2work to Sheffield

- Met teachers, organisers and discussed issues around the provision in UK
- Met and talked to learners about their experiences
- Received learning materials for use in Denmark

Lessons Learnt for DK

The lessons learned from the study visit to Sheffield included:

- The importance of the right atmosphere: We noticed the surroundings of the college and university were very student oriented with lots of activity, which creates an atmosphere one wants to be a part of.
- In Denmark asylum seekers are separated from the rest of the population by being accommodated in Red Cross centres and taking courses only with other asylum seekers. It was therefore interesting for us to observe classes with a mix of students: immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. We were impressed by the fact that the asylum seekers seemed to be extremely motivated to learn the language and had a high awareness of their future plans and the demands of the society. We didn't get the idea that asylum seekers were depressed or paralysed by their situation, as we see in Denmark.
- Another obvious difference in teaching ESOL in Denmark and in the UK, is the number of classes. In Sheffield College there are about 55 classes at different

levels whereas in Denmark there will probably be only one class in each centre, which demands great deal of differentiation.

- We were all very impressed with the fact that each new student coming to the college is provided with a bag containing paper, pencils, folder, calculator, dictionary etc. We found it a very kind way of welcoming newcomers which makes them feel valued and welcome.
- The classes we observed were very well planned by the teacher. In both classes the structure seemed to be the same: First there was an introduction to a grammatical structure or the special use of a certain word. The teacher explained the grammar rule and made examples to make it obvious to the students. Then the students were introduced to activities that were to take place in pairs or as group work. In one class the teacher even made the activity into a competition, which made it fun and challenging for the students. It is not that these methods are new, but the teachers' attitudes towards the students were remarkably considerate and caring without losing the goal of the lessons. We also noticed how focused and concentrated the students were. They seemed to be totally familiar with the methods of working in groups or pairs.
- Some of the classrooms were in very bad shape, but the teachers managed to create an atmosphere of engagement, humour and natural discipline, so the students would do their best. Furthermore, we found inspiration in the many colourful posters created by the students which gave an idea of the work done and the progress made.
- In addition to the programme made for us by Asset UK, we had the opportunity of visiting Fir Vale School, a secondary school from which a number of pupils go on to study at Fir Vale College or Castle College. The school is a comprehensive school and has 670 pupils of which about 90% have English as additional language. 12% of the pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. The school used to be among the 18 worst in the country as measured by the number of pupils passing GCSE. After a "fresh start" with a new head teacher the rate has gone up from 8% to 33%. One of the key issues in the school is intercultural respect, and pupils with English as additional language are supported by a group of teachers who are language specialists and who also support other teachers who are specialised in other subjects. We were impressed by the leadership of the school as well as being a bit envious of the classrooms, each of which was equipped with an "interactive whiteboard" (it must be the dream of every teacher!)
- We had the pleasure of having lunch in "Sparks restaurant" (a student training restaurant) which was an excellent example of combining practice and theory. We could use it as inspiration for making a similar "project" in one of the Red Cross centres.

Lessons Learnt for UK

- Two completely different systems (in Denmark) for providing language teaching to asylum seekers and refugees. Those granted refugee status are integrated into the community and receive language teacher provided by the state sector. This is not available for asylum seekers. Asylum Seekers live in camps and are separated from Danish people and institutions. Medical treatment, education etc is all provided in the

camps. This has an adverse effect on both the provision for asylum seekers which has low status, has inadequate and insecure funding and also the attitude and motivation of learners. In addition, learners have limited opportunities to use Danish in their everyday lives. Many of those that the visitors from the UK spoke to felt unwanted and insecure about their future in Denmark. In some cases learners chose to learn English rather than Danish because they believed that they were unlikely to be given leave to remain and, therefore, Danish would have limited use.

- Teaching methods for Danish are similar to approaches used within ESOL in the UK. Teachers stressed the importance of relevant contexts for teaching and often produce their own resources because very little published material is available around issues that are relevant and of interest to the learners. In the class UK visitors observed the tutor had produced a text about an asylum seeker being refused refugee status and having to live on food boxes. This reinforced the importance of providing contexts for language learning that people can relate to. Further that language classes are often able to provide learners with an opportunity to learn about the culture and systems of the countries they find themselves in.
- A system in which people are forced to live for extended periods of time in camps has severe consequences on physical and mental well being. Many of the learners UK visitors met talked of the lack of control they have over their lives, that they are unable to have 'normal' family lives, are unable to work or make any contribution to the society. A number reported severe mental distress and teachers also found that learners living in these circumstances were often unable to sustain the effort and commitment required to learn another language.

Ireland

Dublin

- Participation in an international conference and launch of Irish research report on ESOL
- Met teachers, organisers and discussed issues around ESOL provision in Dublin

The UK DP had an Associate Partnership with an Irish organisation [City of Dublin VEC] included within the TCA budget. It was possible for the two transitional visits to Ireland to coincide with other activities and Danish partners were able to share ASSET UK's meetings with Irish partners. The information exchange also ensured that Danish partners got some added value from the Irish association in the context of language acquisition.

International Seminar on ESOL for Asylum Seekers Conference on Wednesday 14 - 15th May 2003. City of Dublin VEC (Asset UK presentations by Refugee Council-David Hudson -on a overview of UK asylum policy and systems, and by BSA – Celine Castelino- on UK ESOL policy and provision.

Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, an EQUAL Transnational Conference Birmingham, on 15-17 June 2003. Dublin VEC gave a presentation on the Irish perspective on reception and integration as part of the Refugee Week open event entitled 'Learning from Each Other; model strategies for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers', as well as making an input into the work shop on equality and diversity.

In general it was felt that

- In Dublin, ESOL provision is far less developed than in the UK in terms of appropriate learner accreditation, provision of classes and teacher training. However, they place strong emphasis on intercultural issues, which was of great interest to UK visitors
- With only limited funding, learners could attend only for a few hours – stress on the importance of secure funding

March 30, 2004 transnational ESOL meeting in Dublin.

The exchange enabled the ASSET UK partners to see the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee's (CDVEC) work on addressing racism and equality in schools as part of their intercultural education work, through the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). They have been addressing the issue of intercultural education, and researching the attitudes of students and teachers towards racism and equality in schools. They then looked at what needs to be done to address these issues and concerns that arose from this research, and how to implement changes. The visit enabled partners to see how CDVEC's CDU are dealing with these fundamental issues and allowed partners to reflect on their own attitudes and practices towards equality and racism. It also enabled partners to ensure that they are addressing these issues and implementing positive action towards them in their own EQUAL activities. A representative from Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (SPIRASI) talked about their ESOL provision using volunteer tutors.

CDVEC has also produced a paper-based materials pack for language learners with literacy needs in their own language. Partners were keen to see the pack and find out how the materials were produced, how learners' needs were assessed and whether the materials have been piloted with learners and how successful they have been. This supported the work LLU+ were undertaking with their basic literacy training, and also supported the language courses being developed by TES and Sheffield College. This materials pack could be used as an example of good practice by the partners to help in developing their work for the EQUAL project.

Lessons learnt from Dublin 30.3.04

- The findings of the report confirmed how challenging it is to teach younger learners in an adult setting as some ESOL learners in Dublin are placed in colleges as there is no space for them in schools. All partners felt this was similar in the UK and were able to exchange ideas on teaching methodology on how to deal with this issue.
- Recruitment of tutors from ethnic minority backgrounds – this is something that partners discovered was not happening in Ireland, and it brought to our attention the importance of equal opportunities with recruitment and how it relates to and reflects the multicultural make-up of ESOL classrooms. Racism, equality, the awareness of learners' backgrounds and their status are issues that if dealt with effectively can provide a positive learning experience for the student. Tutors who are as aware as they can be of the cultural, ethnic, religious make-up of their group will be better able to deal with any problems or issues that arise with students, and will be able to deliver ESOL with their learners' backgrounds and any connected needs in mind.
- The importance of training volunteer ESOL tutors effectively was a key issue, and was something directly relevant for TES work.
- Partners also found it interesting hearing from (SPIRASI) who use a learner-tutor contract, rather like an individual learning plan, to encourage attendance, as well as encouraging learners to telephone in advance if they are unable to come to class. They also use portfolio based learning and learning packs rather than textbooks for

materials and learning, which partners found of interest as it is a different approach to teaching and learning than some of the partners currently use.

- The importance of ensuring quality of provision by carrying out tutor and student evaluations is a particularly relevant point to come out of SPIRASI's presentation. It is essential in any language learning environment to evaluate not only learners' progress but to gain feedback from them on all aspects of their learning experience. Evaluations should form the mid and final part of any learning process, no matter how long or short that process is. Evaluation is a key part of any project activities.
- Any materials which have been developed with particular learners in mind and have been piloted on learners are always a useful teaching tool for ESOL tutors and some partners took the pack with them after the visit to use with their beneficiaries in ESOL classes

Want2work: learning how ESOL is taught in Sheffield. An Equal Transnational Meeting in Sheffield, England 10 - 12 November 2004

The Danish partners visited Sheffield College in order to see the teaching of ESOL "in action". It was discussed whether it would make sense to introduce the ESOL curriculum to asylum seekers in Denmark. The benefits for the asylum seekers would be that they would get a recognised diploma from the lessons learnt in Denmark with the perspective of being able to continue language classes in another EU country. Since the meeting in May, materials and websites have been shared between the partners.

The Danish partners have held a workshop for Red Cross teachers to introduce the concept of teaching ESOL.

Furthermore, two pilot ESOL courses have been held in the Culture House and a report has been written.

Hosts from Sheffield College, Andrew Oatridge and Allison Gascoigne, provided a city tour of Sheffield, which gave a brief introduction to the history and development of the town.

Kathryn Austin, who also provided visitors with material to take back home, introduced the visitors to new books and materials for ESOL learners.

Fadila Taylor introduced Sheffield College and arranged for the visitors to observe language classes at two different levels. The visitors joined a session for advanced learners who talked about their expectations for their future lives.

The visitors met with Hugh Howe, headmaster of Fir Vale secondary school who gave a guided tour around the school and talked about the challenges of running a multicultural school.

An informal meeting with teachers and staff of Sheffield College to discuss issues relating to the ESOL curriculum and teaching.

Working with Employers

Task group exchanges

Asset UK and Want2Work at Equal Transnational Conference (workshop on Working with Employers) in Copenhagen on 3 - 4 December 2002.

Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, an EQUAL Transnational Conference (workshop on Working with Employers) in Birmingham, on 15-17 June 2003.

Asset UK Transnational Seminar on Access to Private Sector Employment for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Friday 13th February 2004. London

20 –21 January 2005, Refugee Days Conference (transnational workshop on engaging with employers), in Denmark.

Towards an Employment Strategy for Asylum Seekers in the UK, 17 March 2005, Birmingham. (Want2Work participated in a workshop on engaging with employers led by NIACE)

Lessons learned from exchanges

From the UK perspective the strategic involvement in the EQUAL of such employment related organisations as the Danish Confederation of Industries, the Confederation of Danish municipalities, Danish Food and Allied Workers Union, Copenhagen Municipality, Association for New Danes, and AMU International. was significantly different from the UK experience

The transnational contact enabled UK visitors to quantify the impact of the Danish asylum process on interaction with employers and contrast this with the UK system. They were also able to compare and contrast the impact on employers' perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees within the two countries and discuss the impact of the difference in size and nature of the Danish and UK economies. The role of the New Danes organisation was particularly interesting. Its closeness to employers and its understanding of the trade unions was clearly fundamental to its success and emphasis's the importance of establishing networks and working relationships when engaging with employers. The track record of New Danes and CDI involvement were also pivotal in securing the confidence of employers. It was clear that skills auditing had a similarly pivotal function within the engagement process in both the UK and Denmark and this enabled the TCA to confidently suggest that an EU wide take up of the skills audit approach would be beneficial, not least because of its potential impact on employers. In particular the early use and comprehensive use of skills audits in Denmark gave significant enhancements to the process of engaging with employers.

The interaction, both relating to skills audits and to work with employers, enabled contacts to take place between practitioners from two countries, which was helpful in giving both teams reassurance and added understanding, and provided helpful encouragement when working in an area so besieged in other ways.

Examples of models of good practice have been identified for a good practice guide on engaging with employers in both Denmark and the UK, which will be an ASSET UK Action 3 product

Five different ways of working with employers were considered by the TCA

- 1) Volunteer placements (job training for asylum seekers)
- 2) Providing employers with tools for company based integration (mentoring etc)
- 3) Asylum Seekers and employers working together on projects (DI project)

4) Matching employers and rejected asylum seekers. Repatriation with perspectives (CV workshop)

5) Working with Employers and Trade Unions at a strategic level

From the DK perspective, the issue of promoting positive images of asylum seekers in the local community has been particularly interesting. As such, the whole concept of the UK Refugee Week and the lessons learned from this at the EQUAL Transnational Conference in Birmingham on 15-17 June, 2003 was very inspiring. Lessons learned also include the UK use of skills auditing in the process covering work experience and qualifications as well as aspirations and potential barriers

Equality/diversity

Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, an EQUAL Transnational Conference in Birmingham, UK on 15-17 June 2003. The theme of the whole conference was Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Plenary presentations included: (i) Access, Participation and Equal Opportunities from an LSC Perspective and (ii) Equal Opportunities: the Northern Ireland Model.[NICEM]. There was also a workshop on equal opportunities and implementation, with input from both Danish and UK and Irish perspectives.

Transnational exchange: Promoting Equality: the Asset UK DP Way, Copenhagen, Denmark, 31st March 2005.

Asset UK (Deng Yai and Saba Khan) provided training for the Danish Red Cross on their equality and diversity practice and policy. The training aimed to enable participants to be able to identify good practice in promoting equality of opportunity as had been done within the Asset UK Development Partnership. The scope of the policy, legislation driving the policy, key principles, equality in the delivery of service, Disability Discrimination Act and the production of information materials were discussed. From the UK perspective, the lessons learned from both exchanges above, included understanding the Danish view and understanding that European countries can have different cultural and practical starting points with regard to equality and diversity policy and practice. In the UK, the legislative structure drives diversity and equality practice, ensuring that good practices are in place. However, in Denmark no such legislation exists except the recent EU Regulations. Conceptually, equality and diversity in Denmark is not as whole-heartedly embraced as in the UK; raising awareness about these issues can be challenging

From the DK perspective, the lessons learned included understanding the good practice of actively implementing an equal opportunity policy and the legislation behind the policy. The issue of using this policy in the production of information material was particularly inspiring.

Documentation, products provided during the TCA exchanges

Management meetings

Meeting with the Danish Red Cross on 14th October 2002 at 3.15pm at the British Refugee Council (minutes)

Danish progress report, notes from transnational meeting, 26 –27 September 2002

NIACE meets Danish Red Cross transitional meeting, 26 –27 September 2002 (DRK) (minutes).

Conference reports on Asset UK Meets Want2Work: an Equal Transnational Conference in Copenhagen on 3 - 4 December 2002.

EQUAL Transnational Skills Audit Task Group Meeting, Belfast 15-16th March 2003 (minutes).

Report on Designing Skills Audit Models for Asylum Seekers 8-9 May 2003 Bornholm Denmark.

Designing Skills Audit Models for Asylum Seekers CD–Rom, May 2003, Bornholm Denmark

Skills audit transitional meeting, Friday 9th May 2003, Bornholm (minutes)

The Skills Audit Transnational Toolkit CD-ROM.

Report on Equal Opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, an EQUAL Transnational Conference in Birmingham, on 15-17 June 2003.

Report on Asset UK Transnational Seminar on Access to Private Sector Employment for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Friday 13th February 2004, (minutes).

European Thematic Group on Asylum Seekers, Skills Audits – The Basics: Working with Asylum Seekers. Asylum Seekers in the EU: the Challenges of Integration, Dublin, 31st March – 2nd April 2004. Asset UK and Danish Red Cross input into this document for Action 2/3.

Skills Audit Group Meeting 22 –23 September 2004 at NIACE Leicester (minutes).

The Right Opportunity for the Right Skills, Equal Promotes Skills Audits with Asylum Seekers, 1st April 2005

Skills Audit Brochure, 1st April 2005. Asset UK and Danish Red Cross input into this document for Action 2/3.

Asset UK Meets Want2Work, an Equal Transnational ESOL Meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark 3-4 May 2004, LLU+.

ESOL basic skills: Danish Red Cross visit to Sheffield College 10 –12 November 2004.

Refugee days, Copenhagen, Denmark, 20 -21 January 2005. www.want2work.org

Promoting Equality: The Asset UK DP Way, Copenhagen, Denmark, 31st March 2005.

Irish Exchanges

International Seminar on ESOL for Asylum Seekers; Conference Proceedings Wednesday 14 - 15th May 2003. City of Dublin VEC.

Report on ASSET UK and Want2Work Transnational visit to CDVEC on 31st March 2004

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