



Evaluation of the TC Improving Childcare: Final Report

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Evaluation of the Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare' – Management Summary

The Evaluation Institute 'Univation' conducted the evaluation of the Transnational Co-operation (TC) 'Improving Childcare' (EQUAL II) from 31st of March 2006 until 30th of November 2007. This management summary contains information about design and essential conclusions of the evaluation as well as an outline of the TC and its outputs.

Principal: Developmental Partnerships of the Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare' (TCA Id code: 3849; ABC, Germany, Sabine Görke-Becker; CO.P.IN, Italy, Chiara Civitano; ECCE AMA, Belgium (nl), Jan Peeters; FORWARD!, Lithuania, Jurgita Peciuriene; QUALIflex, Luxembourg, Nicole Horn; UNE ARDEUR D'ENFANCE, Belgium (fr), Florine Eppe)

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Evaluation purpose and questions. The purpose of the evaluation in 2006 and the follow-up in spring 2007 in its formative part is to supply the transnational partners with information which provides them with the opportunity to reflect and improve the management of the co-operation process as well as the fulfilment of their tasks: 'To what extent does the transnational partnership manage to build and develop a stable and performing network with common targets? To what extent do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level?' The purpose of the evaluation in its summative part in autumn 2007 is to contribute to the validation of results and mainstreaming of good practice. 'To what extent do the transnational partners jointly develop methodologies, approaches or products and use them in their DP work? To what extent did the transnational partnership build and develop a stable and performing network?'

Method. Two Partner Surveys have been conducted in autumn 2006 'Network and Goals' and autumn 2007 'Network and Lessons Learned'. There has been a follow-up to the first survey in spring 2007. The questionnaire is sent by email to the evaluation contact persons. They are asked to forward the questionnaire to the persons of their Developmental Partnership that have been involved in transnational work. On the transnational meeting in Gent in September 2007 the work groups have been interviewed (standardised interview) as to the status of products and mainstreaming activities. Products are evaluated additionally on the basis of Product Descriptions by the work groups.

Results and Conclusions. The Transnational Partnership 'Improving Childcare' (EQUAL II) has been very enriching for every participating partner. The partnership achieved a high level of network quality and satisfaction and was very successful in reaching its goals. All partners are very satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation. In the beginning of the project period several action objectives were defined, which belong to the intermediary aims of information and experience exchange, product development and mainstreaming. Original action objectives of the transnational co-operation and work groups have been adapted merely slightly under way. The partnership has been very successful in reaching their action objectives, apart from some delays concerning the original deadlines (as found for instance in the first evaluation round).

The aim of information and experience exchange has been met to a high degree with a positive development in the course of the co-operation. All partners state to have implemented gained information and experiences in their national projects and that implemented ideas left marks in the DP work. All intended products have been developed, additionally even a further report – developed by three of the original work groups together. The action objectives of mainstreaming are supposed to be met by the end of the partnership. All partners plan to continue with mainstreaming activities beyond 2007.

Planning and organisation of the TC and the use of communication means play a major role in feedback concerning lessons learned. The message to politicians and professionals in the field is: Such a transnational co-operation is very useful, because it is possible and necessary to learn from other European countries.

Goals and Activities. The Transnational Co-operation (TC) 'Improving Childcare' agrees in its vision to import, export or adopt new approaches in the field of childcare. Furthermore decision makers in EC politics, national authorities and professionals in the field shall be enabled to make use of the jointly developed approaches. Seven transnational meetings and study visits have taken place with all partners in every partner country in turn as well as a conference in Luxembourg. Additionally work groups organised small intermediary working meetings and conferences.

Starting position of the Transnational Co-operation. An important aspect of the EQUAL programme is to integrate national-level innovation through its Development Partnerships (DPs) with transnational collaboration and exchange of good practice. The Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) 'Improving Childcare' was validated by the National Managing Authorities in May 2005. In the meantime another partner contacted QUALiflex (Luxembourg): the DP ECCE AMA (Belgium, nl). The first meeting with all six partners took place in September 2005 in Lithuania.

Outputs. Work group 'Flexible Models of Childcare' produced a country report (and a short version) around the topic in English and additionally a document/ synthesis of main quality criteria of flexible childcare structures. Work group 'Integrated Services' developed a questionnaire to compare models of integrated services in childcare and a report based on the collected answers to the questionnaire. In work group 'Training-professionalization and accreditation' four documents were developed: a 'Country Report' (report and brochure on professionalisation in child care professions in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Luxembourg), an interview-manual (a questionnaire and its guidelines) regarding the 'Accreditation of Prior Learning in Family Day Care' and a 'Comparison of Training Paths in the Field of Childcare'. The result is a joint report entitled 'Perspectives on care work with young children'.

Work group 'DVD' has finished the film 'Childcare Stories' and made subtitles in 5 languages (English, French, German, Dutch and Italian). The DVD includes a documentary of 25 minutes and ten interviews. Furthermore there is brochure (in Dutch and in English) for every interview that helps to work with the target groups using the video.

The translation and adaptation of a brochure on the participation of fathers in child care centers, developed by the Belgian partner (Be-nl), is the product of work group 'Gender Screening Instrument'. It is now available in three languages: Dutch, German, French. It is a guide how to foster the participation of fathers in child care centers. It includes a text about the theoretical background of the problem, a self evaluation plan and an action plan.

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1 Introduction

The EQUAL Initiative operates within the broad framework of the European Employment Strategy. As an EC initiative it is to promote new ways of combating all types of labour market discrimination and inequalities. It is planned to be a learning forum that supports new creative ideas and innovative solutions.

An important aspect of the programme is to integrate national-level innovation through its Development Partnerships (DPs) with transnational collaboration and exchange of good practice. On transnational level the programme is supposed to support transnational collaboration and exchange of experience thereby strengthening the European dimension of employment and inclusion. Partnerships undertake further innovation and development work jointly with other partners in Europe.

The partners of the Transnational Co-operation (TC) 'Improving Childcare: Needs of children and families – demands of the labour market' aim at reducing the discrimination of women on the labour market, reducing the unemployment and ameliorating the quality in the fields of child care and social services provided to vulnerable families. Main focus of the collaboration is the exchange of information and experiences and joint product development.

In their vision the transnational partners agree to import, export or adopt new approaches in the field of childcare. Furthermore decision makers in EC politics, national authorities and professionals in the field shall be enabled to make use of the jointly developed approaches.

2 Starting Position

2.1 Conditions

2.1.1 Structure

- *Question:* Have the transnational partners worked together before EQUAL II? Have there been personal contacts between responsible persons before EQUAL II? Please describe intensity and engagement/ commitment as well as constellation of **former working contacts!**

During round I of EQUAL the DP's Luxembourg "QUALiflex – Qualität und Flexibilität in der Kinderbetreuung" former "FOGAflex" and Belgium (fr) "UNE ARDEUR D'ENFANCE" former "Accueil de l'Enfance" already worked together in a transnational co-operation. One of the working modules of this transnational co-operation was the accreditation of prior learning experience. They developed a profile of competences for child minders. This theme will be followed up in the Transnational Co-operation "Improving Childcare" in EQUAL II. With their group there was also a project named "Travailler et être parents en milieu rural: un défi à l'espace et au temps" of „Familles rurales“ from France which is now associated partner for the Transnational Co-operation. During EQUAL I the three partners worked at three modules:

- o training and accreditation of prior learning experience
- o flexibility and mobility of childcare structures and of persons working in the field of childcare
- o Survey/ needs assessment instrument.

The partners met through the EQUAL Initiative in round I for the first time and didn't have contact before EQUAL.

- *Question:* How else did the transnational partners find together? What criteria were crucial for the choice of the current partners or **final constellation of partners?**

A first meeting between Luxembourg and Germany was arranged after contact via EQUAL database at the end of February 2005 in Luxembourg. In March 2005 further partners were found via recherche in the EQUAL data base. A meeting was arranged between Italy, Lithuania, Germany, and Luxembourg. Belgium (fr) could not participate, Luxembourg acted for this partner. The result was a Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA). The TCA was validated by the National Managing Authorities in May 2005.

In the meantime another partner contacted QUALiflex (Luxembourg): the DP ECCE AMA (Belgium, nl). At first a bilateral co-operation was worked out and put forward for validation through the National Authorities. But after a while (during the following transnational meeting in September 2005) they considered to ask the TC "Improving Childcare" for integration.

The partners of the TC agreed. The official start of the co-operation was in July 2005, as this was the start of the EQUAL phase II in Germany and Italy – while phase II in some other countries had started before. The first meeting with all six partners took place in September 2005 in Lithuania.

In addition to common work fields and interests as well as an essential knowledge of English and/ or French, the following criteria were crucial for the choice of the transnational partners (by example of the DP in Luxembourg): the good match with the themes/ goals of the other DPs; the number of partners should be more than 2 or 3 but less than 10; the possibility to have a French-speaking working-group (according to the wish of the belge partner (fr)).

2.1.2 Context

- *Question:* What are the **legal conditions** of the Transnational Co-operation?

Transnational co-operation is integral to EQUAL. Learning through promoting and transferring know-how and good practice between partnerships and between Member States is a key objective. Transnational co-operation provides a unique added-value for Member States and European policy-making. All EQUAL DPs participate through:

- a) Preparation, where each DP structures its national and transnational work programmes, and sets up the partnerships to deliver them; at the conclusion of this phase (approximately 3-6 months), DPs must present a common strategy in the form of a Development Partnership Agreement (DPA). This must include a description of how they want to add value by collaborating with DPs from abroad. This is a specific Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) drawn up with at least one partner (and usually more) from other Member States;
- b) Implementation, where these joint national and transnational work programmes are carried out over a period of around two to three years;
- c) Dissemination and transfer to policy and practice (mainstreaming), where thematic networking, benchmarking, peer reviews or fora will be used to facilitate dissemination of good practice making an impact on national and European policy. In order to support validation and sharing of good practice Member States are also able to fund some entirely new partnerships whose only objective is to transfer EQUAL experience into policy and practice (EQUAL Communication - "Free movement of good ideas" – COM 2003/840 para 11.4.17 - 18). All these activities run in parallel to the implementation and up to the very end of eligibility of the EQUAL programme.

Transnational thematic networking is organised and managed by the European Commission, in collaboration with the Managing Authorities in the Member States. There have been specific mechanisms and instruments incorporated into the design of the EQUAL Initiative to help DPs and participants overcome some of the difficulties hitherto associated with setting up and maintaining transnational partnerships are p.ex. participation by DPs in thematic networks. Participation in EQUAL requires a joint national and transnational approach. [extract from EQUAL brochure about transnational co-operation]

The procedure for the TCA is as follows: 1) the partners agree on the co-operation, 2) QUALiflex (Luxembourg) as secretary for the EQUAL data base puts the agreement online, 3) the DP's accept the published TCA, 4) the National Managing Authorities accept the TCA.

- *Question:* What relevant general conditions are there concerning **public attention** or public opinion or political discussion or cultural background – in Europe and in the participating nations? (p.ex. major topic in the news; major topic on the political agenda; initiatives of regional authorities)

One of EQUAL's main topics is the equality of chances. The basis for the EQUAL programme concerning the support of women is the Lisbon Strategy adopted in the EU, which says: 60% of the European women shall be in employment/ have work.

In all member states of the TC 'Improving Childcare' the current childcare situation puts obstacles in the way of working women: the opening hours of childcare institutions are rigid, while the labour market requires flexibility of the women.

2.1.3 Input

- *Question:* Before EQUAL II, have there been any **financial means** available to the transnational partners for similar activities or goals? What sources have been used?

The partners Belgium (fr), Luxembourg and Italy have been financially supported through EQUAL I for similar projects.

The partners in Italy have also used other financial resources for projects in the childcare sector before, for instance from the Region or National Government.

Belgium (nl) did in order of the European DECET Network (Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training) the research and the production of a documentary film on integrated services for young children and parents ('Lullaby for Hamza, childcare as a meeting place'). This is the forerunner of the DVD produced in the running Transnational Co-operation.

- *Question:* How was the **preparatory work** for the transnational co-operation financed?

5 to 10% of the budget of the DP's is recommended by the EQUAL programme for transnational work.

QUALiflex (Luxembourg)¹: The preparatory work for the transnational work as for the whole project was financed by proper means. Nevertheless the experiences/contacts of FOGAflex were useful facilitators.

- *Question:* What **further resources** have been available to the transnational partners, such as staff (with what kind of qualification), rooms or equipment, etc.?

In order to continue the collaboration started during a transnational partnership in EQUAL I (TCA 'Accueil de l'Enfance'), 'Familles Rurales' is planning to follow the TC as associated partner.

¹ This paragraph has been added by QUALiflex (Lux).

The Development Partnership in Luxembourg (QUALiflex) is co-financed by Luxembourg's Ministry for Employment.

The Developmental Partnerships in Italy and Germany are co-financed: private resources (money, staff, rooms, equipment) are needed and acquired by the DP's to cover the expenses of the project.

Further input is given by experts via national contacts of the DP's, for example by members of the Ministries, who are invited to meetings/ study visits of the TC.

2.1.4 Income

- *Question:* What **qualifications or resources** does the staff of the DP's bring into the transnational work?

Professional, methodical expertise and knowledge in the field are brought in through the national projects, i.e. their staff.

- *Question:* What special/ beneficial/ obstructive **attitudes and values** concerning the transnational co-operation can be found in the participating staff?

The transnational work is being seen as enriching and worthwhile. The partners are bringing many ideas and efforts into the partnership.

There is a compromise concerning the languages: French is working language in one working group (Accreditation of prior learning experience), which enables more partners in Belgium and Luxembourg to participate in the work process.

- *Question:* What are important **requirements/ needs** of the participating staff in the transnational cooperation?

Staff should be able to communicate in a common foreign language. Staff should be trained to work in a multicultural context and to "meet" other systems and be willing to participate.

At times there is a translator needed.

2.2 Plan

2.2.1 Concept and quality of goals

- *Question:* At what point a **concept and a basis for a goal system** existed for the transnational work? Please assess clearness and consistency of concept and goals in July 2005!

The activities and the target products of the working groups as they are specified in the TCA are an essential basis for the goal system developed with Univation.

3 Evaluation Purpose and Evaluation Questions

3.1 Utilisation of the Evaluation Findings

Users of the evaluation findings will be the transnational partners. On the second transnational meeting in March 2006 the following expectations concerning the utilisation of the evaluation have been expressed by the six partners:

- to improve the information exchange and methods for the exchange of experiences and know-how;
- to know, what to do better in organising study visits;
- to know, how the partners think and feel about the transnational co-operation;
- to get a summary about the results of the transnational work;
- to know, what is efficient and best practice;
- to get an external view.

3.2 Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is therefore to supply the transnational partners with information which provides them with the opportunity to reflect and improve the management of the co-operation process as well as the fulfillment of their tasks. The summative part of the evaluation will contribute to the validation of results and mainstreaming of good practice.

3.3 Evaluation Questions

As set in the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) all partners are to be involved in defining the key questions to be answered for the evaluation of transnational work and finding the criteria for success of the transnational work.

Referring to the evaluation purpose and the goal system the following evaluation questions are formulated (see table 1). Because of the limited budget and time, there have to be set priorities for the different evaluation phases.

Table 1: Evaluation Questions

Nr.	[yellow: proposed by Univation, white: deduced from the goal system, green: priority set by the TC]
I.	To what extent does the transnational partnership manage to build and develop a stable and performing network with common targets?
I.a	To what extent does a common vision of the network exist? To which amount does the common vision serve as a basis for strategies and targets?
I.b	How effective or efficient is the steering of the network? [important note: alternating secretatry, no coordinator]
I.c	How are the communication processes organised? How satisfied are the transnational partners with the communication processes?

I.d	What benefit do the transnational partners gain from their participation in the network? How do they evaluate their benefits in relation to their costs?
II.	To what extent the targets of the TC are reached in selected areas?
II.a	To what extent do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level?
II.b	To what extent do the transnational partners jointly develop methodologies, approaches or products and use them in their DP work?
II.c	To what extent are professionals in the field, national authorities and decision makers in the EC politics informed about the concepts and products of the transnational co-operation?

Legend:

	proposed by Univation
	priority set by the TC for the first survey (2006)
	priority set by the TC for the final survey (2007)
	deduced from the goal system

3.4 Basic Outline of the Evaluation Design

The formative part of the evaluation ensures the availability of information in the run-up to decisions. This is done by means of a series of measurements in the course of the project combined with immediate feedback the TC. The focus of the on-going evaluation will lay on process relevant facts and activities: eg organisation of the collaboration, processes of communication, information exchange, development of products. To gather this information, partner surveys will be conducted, which take in the opinions of persons involved in the current activities.

The summative part of the evaluation concentrates on the results: the assessment of the outputs, final outcomes and potential impacts, eg aspects of sustainability of the developed products and transfer in the national working processes. To gather this information, the work groups are interviewed and their product descriptions analysed. Furthermore a partner survey is conducted, which takes in the opinions of persons involved in the national and transnational activities.

4 Process Communication, Steering and Consultations

The communication process complies with the demands of the participated parties. The participation in transnational meetings as well as a regular e-mail and telephone contact are part of the on-going and utilisation-focused evaluation.

At the kick-off of the external evaluation the transnational partners announced each a contact person for the evaluator. Each time an evaluation step has to be made, the contact persons are involved and asked for feedback and/ or agreement. The general goals of the TC and the evaluation questions both have been worked out and/ or adopted at transnational meetings. This way, every partner has been involved in major decisions concerning the evaluation plans. All relevant evaluation documents are published in the member area of the internet portal. Between the transnational meetings the transnational partners are regularly informed via their evaluation contact persons about the evaluation steps and plans. In the same way the evaluator needs to be informed by the transnational partners about relevant events in the Transnational Co-operation.

5 Method

5.1 Evaluation Plan

At the 3rd transnational meeting (27th of September 2006) the following evaluation plan has been adopted.

1. The network and its functioning (evaluation question I) is part of every data collection in 2006 as well as 2007. Among others the network survey includes items concerning the use of the (member area of the) internet portal.
2. Regarding the evaluation question II different priorities for 2006 and 2007 have been adopted. Part 'a' of question II is to be answered by a Partner Survey in Autumn 2006 as well as a Follow-up in Spring 2007:

II.a) Do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level?
3. Part 'c' of question II is the object of the last Partner Survey in Autumn 2007²:

II.c) Are professionals in the field, national authorities and decision makers in the EC politics informed about the concepts and products of the transnational co-operation?
4. The remaining part 'b' of question II is the object of a product monitoring which is implemented in Autumn 2006 and regularly followed up until 2007:

II.b) Do the transnational partners jointly develop methodologies, approaches or products and use them in their DP work?

To confirm the evaluation plan for autumn 2007, the evaluator conducted a series of (telephone) interviews in August 2007. As a result the topic of the final evaluation round is the success of product development (first priority) as well as the mainstreaming activities and the network quality.

5.2 Data Collection Instruments

5.2.1 Partner Survey in Autumn 2006

Due to the formative character of the evaluation it is sensible to choose for 2006 an area, that is amenable to changes but on the other hand already shows results: II.a) "Do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level?". This evaluation question takes into account different methods of exchange: working meetings, communication by e-mail and mail, study visits, internet portal (electronic communication platform) and conferences. According to the evaluation question II.a action objectives have been

² The priority for the Partner Survey in autumn has been changed to II.b in summer 2007 by the partners.

specified (see appendix 'Goal System', objectives marked [IA 1]) that are object to examination in 2006.

5.2.2 Follow-Up in Spring 2007

In spring 2007 a follow-up of the first partner survey (autumn 2006) was conducted – including some questions about the production process of the brochure on Integrated Services (Coordinators: Germany and Lithuania, joined by Italy and Luxembourg).

5.2.3 Final Evaluation Round in Autumn 2007

According to the evaluation question II.b action objectives have been specified that are object to examination in 2007 (see appendix 'Goal System', objectives marked [IA 2]). Additionally, information concerning conducted and planned mainstreaming activities is collected. Success and sustainability of the transnational network are explored and 'Lessons Learned' are analysed.

The last update of the Goal System (appendix) took place in December 2006. There have been slight adaptations concerning the action objectives that have not been monitored by the evaluation in 2007. The goal system gives an orientation on what had been planned in the beginning.

On the 5th transnational meeting in Lithuania in May 2007, three work groups decided to set up one joint work group 9. Work groups 2 'Child Minders Profession', 3 'Prior Learning Experiences' and 8 'Report on Professionalisation' have merged and products have been put together. Work group 9 writes a common report on 'Training-professionalisation and accreditation of prior learning in the field of childcare professions'.

The final evaluation round consists of three steps: 1) interviews of all work groups concerning product development and mainstreaming – which took place at the transnational meeting in Gent in most cases, except one as a telephone interview and another as a questionnaire; 2) description of the products by the work groups (i.e. filling out the respective form) and 3) last questionnaire concerning the success of the network and lessons learned.

5.2.4 Product Monitoring Instrument

The product monitoring (see appendix for the instrument) is conducted and followed up by the working groups of the TC, i.e. their respective person responsible. After each transnational meeting the form is filled out and sent to the secretary. The secretary keeps an eye on the process, brings the data together in one table/ a synopsis and makes the synopsis available to all transnational partners including the external evaluation. In case any working group misses to send their monitoring form, the secretary reminds the respective person responsible to catch up. According to the evaluation question II.b, action objectives have been specified and therefore are the object to examination by product monitoring (see appendix 'Goal System', objectives marked [IA 2]).

5.3 Procedure

5.3.1 Time Table

The following table 2 gives an overview of the evaluation steps and the time table according to the events of the TC.

Table 2: Evaluation steps and events of the TC

Date	Event	Evaluation (Univation)
March 2006	2 nd Transnational meeting/ study visit in Germany	Presentation of the evaluation team and discussion on the evaluation purpose and plan, including the elaboration of the objectives of the TC
From April to July 2006		A goal system is worked out and agreed on; Evaluation questions are defined; Structure-Map and context analysis
September/ October 2006	3 rd Transnational meeting/ study visit/ conference in Luxembourg	Presentation of the evaluation plan; Proposal for product monitoring; 1 st round of partner survey; 1 st short report of evaluation
December 2006	4 th Transnational meeting in Italy	
March/ April 2007		Follow-up of the 1 st partner survey
May 2007	5 th Transnational meeting in Lithuania	Presentation of results: Follow-up of the 1 st partner survey; 2 nd short report of evaluation
September 2007	6 th Transnational meeting in Belgium (nl)	Visit of the work groups and interviews
October 2007		2 nd partner survey; Analysis of interviews and product descriptions; Draft of final report
November 2007	7 th Transnational meeting	Presentation of results: 2 nd partner survey; Discussion of final report
December 2007		Final report is handed over

6 First Partner Survey in Autumn 2006: Data Basis and Results

presented by Dörte Schott

6.1 Data Sources and Information Basis

On the 13th of October 2006 an e-mail with the Partner Survey questionnaire was sent to the evaluation contact persons. They were asked to forward the questionnaire to every person of their Developmental Partnership that has been involved in the transnational work. Furthermore they were asked to fill out the questionnaire themselves and to send it back until the 31st of October 2006.

On request, the deadline was extended until the 10th of November 2006. On the 2nd of November a reminder e-mail was sent.

Altogether 18 questionnaires have been answered and sent back. Two partners sent one questionnaire which they had answered in a team of up to four interviewees. The other four partners sent three to five questionnaires back.

6.2 Data Analysis

If not otherwise identified in the text, the quantitative items are five-step rating scales: I completely agree (1) – I agree (2) – I partly agree (3) – I don't agree (4) – I don't agree at all (5). For the quantitative analysis of these rating scales the questionnaires are subsumed and calculated as one questionnaire for each transnational partner.

For the qualitative analysis – including for instance all text answers – all answers are analysed separately that means independently of belonging to one of the transnational partners.

Three of the interviewees assess their English language skills to be basic, twelve as advanced and three as excellent.

6.3 Results

All in all the transnational work is well in progress and the network seems to be well-functioning and rather stable. Deadlines concerning the work programme, for example action objectives, are not always met, though. This could lead to some unfinished tasks when the financial support through EQUAL expires.

The Partner Survey was finished by a question concerning the satisfaction of the partners with the Transnational Co-operation. Two partners are very satisfied, three are rather satisfied and one is rather not satisfied (M=1,7; i.e. the average is "rather satisfied").

Survey (rating scale): Altogether, are you satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation, Improving Childcare? (Very satisfied – rather satisfied – rather not satisfied – Not satisfied at all.)

6.3.1 Part I – Network

Generally the network has a good basis concerning a common vision or benefit for the partners or communication structure. There is a slight risk concerning the stability of the network though, because not every partner seems to be well-integrated.

All partners are generally interested to participate in this transnational network. Only one partner declares to be only partly interested. The same partner is rather not satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation overall (see above). This fact is reflected in his votes all through the questionnaire, especially concerning the network: He doesn't agree to seven out of ten questions (70%). Whereas all other partners disagree in maximum three out of ten items each (max. 30%).

6.3.1.1 Vision

Altogether a common vision exists (M=2,0; i.e. "I agree") among the partnership. However for three of six partners the aims of the TC seem not to go well with the targets of the national Developmental Partnership (3 values $\geq 2,5$). Two of these partners think that the objectives of the TC are not defined clearly (2 values $\geq 2,5$).

6.3.1.2 Benefit

All in all there is a benefit from the co-operation for the transnational partners (M=1,9; i.e. "I agree"). Only one partner declares not to discover synergies in the co-operation (value $\geq 2,5$). However, this partner does benefit from the contacts offered through the partnership. Two other partners don't feel they are getting more publicity through the co-operation (2 values $\geq 2,5$), but discover synergies and networking benefits.

In the survey the transnational partners gave examples for how and what for they can use the competencies of other TC members (the most frequent answer first):

- To get new ideas or to enlarge their own know how (mentioned in 13 examples),
- Generally as an input for their national work (mentioned in 8 examples),
- For national mainstreaming or public relation matters

Evaluation Question 2006: To what extent does the transnational partnership manage to build and develop a stable and performing network with common targets?

Survey (rating scale): I am strongly interested to participate in this transnational network.

Vision: To what extent does a common vision of the network exist? To what extent does the common vision serve as a basis for strategies and targets?

Benefit: What benefit do the transnational partners gain from their participation in the network?

Survey (question): How and what for do you use the competencies of the transnational partners? Please give two examples!

or lobbying their local politicians (mentioned in 5 examples), or

- To implement products or methods used in the TC directly into their national work (mentioned in 4 examples).

Concordantly the partners hope to gain the following benefits from the co-operation (the most frequent answer first):

- Experiences or knowledge growth (mentioned in 25 examples),
- Contacts or network advantages (mentioned in 6 examples),
- Products or methods (mentioned in 3 examples).

Survey (question): What are the two biggest benefits you hope to gain by participating in the network?

6.3.1.3 Communication

The communication between the transnational partners is seen as high-producing (M=2,3; i.e. “I agree”) by four out of six partners. The same four partners declare to be willing to plan new projects with their partners.

Communication: How are the communication processes organised? How satisfied are the transnational partners with the communication processes?

Asked for communication problems or any suggestions for an improvement of communication efficacy, 13 of 18 interviewees refer to the use of communication means and 4 of 18 persons refer to duration and frequency of communication. Language problems are mentioned as an obstacle.

Survey (question): In your opinion, what are further possibilities to make communication processes in the TC more efficient? Do you see any restraints/ obstacles at the moment?

As to **duration and frequency**, more time during the meetings is asked for working groups (mentioned 3 times). Furthermore a higher frequency of meetings is suggested as well as more time to exchange information about the contents and status of other working groups.

Concerning the **communication means**, the most frequent recommendation is a better and more frequent use of the internet portal (mentioned 10 times). Other suggestions are to meet in smaller groups, to prepare working groups better and to have telephone conferences between meetings.

If the different communication means are successfully implemented is being examined via separate votes:

- a) meetings in our working groups (M=2,4; i.e. “I agree”)
- b) study visits: M=1,6; i.e. “I agree”

Survey (rating scale): Up to now, the following means of communication are successfully implemented or effectively used by the partners of our TC for the exchange of information and/ or documents...

- c) conferences (as in Luxembourg): M=2,4; i.e. “I agree”
- d) member area of the internet portal: M=3,3; i.e. “I partly agree”
- e) e-mail: M=2,1; i.e. “I agree”
- f) mail: M=3,1; i.e. “I partly agree”.

The portal is thought to be least effectively used of all mentioned communication means. Not one partner gives the portal a positive vote. Working group meetings, study visits, conferences and e-mail are assessed to be effectively used. Although working group meetings and conferences still have a lot of potential which can be realized in future.

6.3.1.4 Meetings

The transnational meetings are assessed on average to be successful (M=2,3; i.e. “successful”). Two of the partners assess them to be only partly successful (2 values $\geq 2,5$), though.

Suggestions for to make meetings more effective mostly refer to **more time** which is needed during meetings, especially for the work in groups (mentioned 8 times) and a **better preparation** of meetings (mentioned 5 times), including the use of the internet portal between meetings and discipline with “homework”.

Other remarks concerning the effectiveness of meetings are (random order):

- Not so many participants/ big groups,
- A separation of working meetings and study visits,
- A better integration between local and international partners,
- A participation of other countries for becoming known and relevant in an international picture,
- A wider participation of national partners,
- A better balance between using the visits for influencing politicians one the one hand and work in the working groups on the other hand, and
- To clear objectives.

6.3.1.5 Steering

The steering of the network is done conjointly by every partner. Decisions concerning the whole partnership are generally made together with all participants of the trans-

Survey (rating scale): Up to now, to what extent have the transnational meetings been successful?

Survey (question): In your opinion, what are further possibilities to make transnational meetings more effective?

Steering: How effective or efficient is the steering of the network?

national meetings. The secretary is alternating. Each partner commits oneself to this task for the time span of half a year. The steering of the network is therefore difficult to grasp with the existing evaluation instruments. This much can be stated: The confidence between the partners is evaluated as strong or very strong (M=1,9; i.e. "I agree") by four out of six partners. This can be taken as a good sign for an adequate steering. Two partners agree only partly, though.

Survey (rating scale): The confidence between the transnational partners is strong.

6.3.1.6 Needs or Requirements

Asked for current needs in the TC work, eight of 18 persons refer especially to the progress in their **working group**. Six of them recommend more time for the work in groups. One person mentions the difficulty to estimate the time needed in the working groups when organising a meeting. Two persons demand more or better preparation in advance of the working group meetings and remind meeting the deadlines.

Survey (question): In your opinion, what are current needs or requirements for the progress of the transnational work?

Five of 18 persons refer to **communication** needs: While four of them specifically demand a more regular or frequent use of the internet portal, two of them suggest more e-mail contact and generally more communication between meetings.

Furthermore, there are **general remarks** concerning current needs (random order):

- More time (mentioned three times)
- Definition of clear objectives (mentioned twice)
- Working more between meetings (mentioned twice)
- Money
- Persons with intercultural competences
- Knowledge of foreign languages
- Knowledge of the social and political situation in the partner states
- Organisations interested at the development of common European projects
- To understand the advantages to work together and exchange the experiences
- Ability to join transnational meetings for more participants from our DP.

6.3.2 Part II – Goals

Through four ratings the partners give a general impression how the first intermediary aim of the TC is being met: As expected, all partners agree having gained new information through the partnership (mean of all partners, M=1,5). Still four partners agree having benefited from the experience of their transnational partners (M=2,0). Three partners claim to have already implemented ideas gained through the TC (M=2,4). One partner even admits that these implemented ideas have already left their marks or triggered further changes in the DP work (M=2,9).

According to the evaluation question II.a the following action objectives have been specified and therefore are the object to examination in 2006:

6.3.2.1 General Action Objectives

One question is how often the internet portal is used by the interviewees. Three of 18 interviewees claim to visit the portal several times monthly, six declare to visit it at least once a month, whereas eight (44%) admit to use the portal irregularly, one didn't mark any box. Five of the six partners obviously appointed one person to be responsible for internet portal matters: In five countries at least one person claims to visit the portal circa once a month.

The "irregulars" gave the following statements to explain why they don't use the portal more often (random order):

- Others don't use it or I can't find any news (mentioned twice),
- Only before a transnational meeting,
- Only to make comments or looking for reports or programmes,
- Not necessary to use it for own work,
- Not enough time,
- I'm informed by the responsible person of our team by e-mail.

6.3.2.2 Action Objectives of the Working Groups

Action objectives of working group 1 "Flexible Models of Childcare". By the time of the Partner Survey in

Evaluation Question 2006: Do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level? (II.a)

Action objective: The member area of the internet portal is used regularly by all transnational partners for the exchange of information since 2006. (all partners)

Action objectives: (1) Flexible models of childcare (Coordinator: Luxembourg, joined by all

November 2006 the questionnaire “Flexible Models of Childcare” has been finished and answered by all six partners of the TC. It gives an overview of the different methods and settings of flexible childcare. Results of this survey have been brought together in one document.

Quality criteria from Belgium (nl) and Belgium (fr) have been translated into English, the lingua franca of the TC. All these documents are available for all partners of the TC in the member area of the internet portal.

Action objectives of working group 2 “Child minders profession”. By December 2006 a common scheme for the comparison of standards concerning the training of child minders has been distributed to the workgroup members (according to one member of the group this took place at the transnational meeting in September 2006), but is not available to all partners in the workgroup folders of the internet portal. According to the coordinator of the working group, a comparison of childcare profiles seems to be difficult because of their heterogeneity. The comparison is not finished as planned.

Actions objectives of working group 6 “DVD about advantages of day care services”³. The filming took place in Belgium, Luxemburg and Northrhine Westfalia from November 2004 until February 2006. The film is edited and subtitled in four languages. The première of the film took place in September 2006 on the transnational meeting in Luxemburg (Conference “Quality and Flexibility in Childcare”). The DVD was made in October 2006.

Action objectives of working group 7 “Gender Screening Instrument”. In November 2006 two of the working group members state that the participating partners have finished testing the gender instrument. In the member area of the internet portal only an instrument in Dutch is available to all partners, though. The gender pitfalls and ways to handle them are not yet compared. The status of work progress in this regard is difficult to estimate, because the interviewees do disagree about

partners):

Around the theme ‘Flexible models of childcare’ a questionnaire of ten questions is worked out until December 2005.

Each partner of the transnational co-operation answered the questionnaire about ‘Flexible models of childcare’ until Juli 2006.

Existing quality criteria for flexible childcare structures are translated (until Juli 2006).

Action objectives: (2) Child minders profession (Coordinator: Italy, joined by Germany, Luxemburg and Belgium/nl):

By means of a common scheme the differing standards concerning the training for the ‘child minders’ profession are compared until December 2006.

Action objectives: (6) Film (DVD) about the advantages of services (Coordinator: Belgium/nl, joined by Germany and Luxemburg)

The film is produced (editing, subtitling and making of booklet and DVD) before end October 2006.

Action objectives: (7) Gender screening instrument (Coordinator: Belgium/nl, joined by Luxemburg)

The gender instrument developed in Flanders is tested out by the participating partners until 2006. Gender-pitfalls and the ways to handle them are compared until 2006.

³ This paragraph has been included belatedly in January/ February 2007.

this fact, presumably up to half of the comparison is done. The comparison is not finished as planned.

Action objectives of working group 8 “Report on Professionalisation”. The time limit concerning the study on professionalisation seems to be mistaken by the evaluator in the Final Goal System adopted in June 2006. The current time limit for the study of professionalisation is end of 2007.

The other working groups did not explicate an action objective concerning the exchange of information and experiences in the TC (current evaluation question). They are therefore no object to the Partner Survey in 2006. Their presence in the internet portal gives a hint on the status of the running process of these groups, though. Further information about their work progress should be available through the Product Monitoring which is conducted by the working group responsables.

Working group 3 has published a report on the first working group meeting and some brainstorming material in the portal.

Working group 4 has published a questionnaire as well as several filled -in questionnaires, a revised questionnaire, a comment on answered questionnaires and some information about services in the USA is available to the transnational partners.

Action objectives: (8) Report on professionalisation (Coordinator: Belgium/NL, joined by Germany and Luxembourg)

In collaboration with the University of Gent a study is conducted about the evolution towards professionalisation in the countries that are involved in the TCA until 2006.

Presence of working groups 3, 4 and 6 in the internet portal:

(3) Prior learning experiences (Coordinator: Belgium/fr, joined by Luxembourg and Belgium/nl)

(4) Integrated services (Coordinators: Germany and Lithuania, joined by Italy, Luxembourg and Belgium/nl)

7 Follow-Up in Spring 2007: Data Basis and Results

presented by Katja Harich

7.1 Data Sources and Information Basis

On the 17th of April 2007 an e-mail including the Partner Survey questionnaire was sent to the evaluation contact persons. They were asked to forward the questionnaire to three persons of their DP, in order to have a common basis and a comparable number to the last survey.

The deadline was the 30th of April. On request, the deadline was extended until the 4th of May. After reminder e-mails and a phone-call, all the partners replied. Altogether 18 questionnaires have been answered and sent back. One DP sent two and another DP four answers.

A supplement questionnaire was handed out to members of the workgroup "Integrated Services" and collected at the transnational meeting in Vilnius on the 23rd of May.

7.2 Data Analysis

The questionnaire consists of qualitative and quantitative items concerning the network functioning, information exchange and goal achievement.

If not otherwise identified in the text, the quantitative items are five-step rating scales: I completely agree (1) – I agree (2) – I partly agree (3) – I don't agree (4) – I don't agree at all (5). For the quantitative items the questionnaires are analysed frequency-based.⁴

A comparison with the results of the first evaluation questionnaire is possible only with constraints. For instance not every person has answered both questionnaires - last year and this year. Therefore the ratings cannot be directly compared on personal or DP level. For the qualitative analysis, all answers are analysed separately.

7.3 Results

All in all the transnational work is very well in progress and the network seems to be well-functioning and stable. Amongst others, this is shown by the last question concerning the satisfaction of the partners with the Transnational Co-operation. 12 persons are very satisfied and five are rather satisfied (one answer is missing). Compared to the satisfaction in 2006 (M=1,7) an improvement at some point can be assumed (2007: M= 1,3).

Survey (rating scale): Altogether, are you satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare'? (Very satisfied – rather satisfied – rather not satisfied – Not satisfied at all.)

⁴ As differences between the national DP's are not as significant as in the first round, the questionnaires are not subsumed and calculated as one questionnaire for each transnational partner.

7.3.1 Part I – Network

Generally the network has a good basis concerning the common vision, benefit for the partners and the communication structure.

All partners are generally interested to participate in the transnational network. 12 persons completely agree to the statement "I am strongly interested to participate in this transnational network", four agree, whereas two agree partly (2007 M=1,4). In 2006 nine persons completely agreed, five agreed and three agreed partly. (2006: M=1,7)

Evaluation question: To what extent does the transnational partnership manage to build and develop a stable and performing network with common targets?

Survey (rating scale): I am strongly interested to participate in this transnational network.

7.3.1.1 Vision

Altogether clearly defined objectives do exist (M= 2,1) among the partnership. Five persons completely agree to this statement, nine agree, two partly agree. However, two persons do not agree to this statement. Taking into account the possibility that different members of the DP have answered the first and the second questionnaire, one could notice a slight shift towards a clearer definition of objectives.(2006, M= 2,2)

Survey (rating scale): We have clearly defined objectives for our TC work

In general, the aims of the TC are suitable to the ones of the specific national projects. Seven out of 18 persons completely agree, eight agree and three partly agree to this statement.

Survey (rating scale): The aims of the TC are suitable to the ones of our DP

7.3.1.2 Benefit

All in all, the partners notice a benefit from the co-operation for the transnational partners.

Only one person declares not to discover synergies in the co-operation. The majority agrees (10 persons) or completely agrees (seven persons) to the statement about useful and important synergies that emerge through the transnational activities. The contacts of the transnational partners are beneficial for most of the partners. Two persons partly agree to this statement, eight agree, eight completely agree. (2007: M=1,7). Considering the mean value in 2006 (M=1,7) an insignificant improvement can be noticed.

Benefit: What benefit do the transnational partners gain from their participation in the network?

Most of the respondents (11 persons) estimate they are gaining more publicity through the co-operation, one respondent completely agrees. Six persons answer more

reserved with "partly agree".

In the Follow-Up Survey the transnational partners gave examples for how and what for they can use the competencies of other TC members. According to the respondents the transnational cooperation has enabled the participants to get new input and useful information (e.g. childcare policy in other countries), to integrate new knowledge and gain a new insight into own national contexts. Best practices of the partners can be used and applied (e.g. in Luxembourg) and products developed by the TC partners are used for mainstreaming activities. Besides exchange on specific topics and instruments and networking, four concrete aspects are mentioned: using experts' competencies in conferences, use of information for university lectures, publications and discussions, for the making of the film and the gender instrument, and the usefulness of partners' competencies in daily work.

Survey (question): How and what for do you use the competencies of the transnational partners? Please give two examples!

Concordantly the partners hope to gain the following benefits from the co-operation (the most frequent answer first):

- To adapt/ to find /to transfer /to learn by best practices (mentioned six times)
- Networking (mentioned six times)
- To gain new ideas/ more experience (mentioned three times)

Survey (question): What are the two biggest benefits you hope to gain by participating in the network?

Other concrete benefits that are anticipated are named: "promoting the national activities by presenting international experts", "evaluation of national work", "comparing structures", "improving national projects", "study visits", "larger distribution of products" and a "broader understanding of social security systems and childcare in Europe".

7.3.1.3 Communication

The co-operation of the partners is seen as high-producing (M=2,2; i.e. "I agree"). Two persons completely agree, 11 agree. On the other hand, there are four respondents who partly agree and one person who doesn't agree. In 2006, one respondent completely agreed, 11 agreed, five persons agreed partly and one didn't agree to the statement (M=2,3).

Communication: How is the communication process organised? How satisfied are the transnational partners with the communication processes?

Asked for communication difficulties and suggestions for an improvement of communication efficacy, seven persons refer to the use of communication means. Three of them suggest a better use of the internet portal; one recommends focusing on different means of communication such as telephone calls and e-mail. One person underlines the importance of telephone calls and telephone conferences between the meetings.

The duration and frequency of communication (face-to-face) is mentioned three times. ("we should see more often", "we could allow more time and more involvement to strengthen the communication" "due to the big distances and the travel costs face to face contact is often not possible"). Five members of the TC express their contentment with the communication. ("quite efficient", "no real problems", "happy with the communication process", "at this stage we do communicate quite well", "good planning and timing make it more efficient at this time"). English as a foreign language for all partners and big distances are described as challenging. According to one respondent "few partners could react to e-mail quicker" and one stresses on more leadership to accelerate processes in the working groups.

The implementation of different communication means is being examined via separate votes:

- a) meetings in our working groups (M=2,06; i.e. "I agree")
- b) study visits: M=1,6; i.e. "I agree"
- c) conferences M=2,1; i.e. "I agree"
- d) member area of the internet portal: M=3,1 i.e. "I partly agree"
- e) e-mail: M=1,9; i.e. "I agree"
- f) mail: M=3,4; i.e. "I partly agree".

Mails are rated as the least effective means of communication, followed by the internet portal, which was the least effective tool in 2006. Only two respondents agree to the statement that the internet portal is successfully implemented or effectively used by the partners, 13 agree partly, three persons do not agree.

This tendency is also shown by the use of the internet portal: Six persons use this tool several times monthly (33%), three (17%) once a month and nine irregularly

Survey (question): In your opinion, what are further possibilities to make communication processes in the TC more efficient? Do you see any restraints/ obstacles at the moment?

Survey (rating scale): Up to now, the following means of communication are successfully implemented or effectively used by the partners of our TC for the exchange of information and/ or document.

(50%) (see 7.3.2.1).

Working group meetings, study visits, conferences and e-mail are assessed to be effectively used. Although working group meetings still have a potential for further development.

7.3.1.4 Meetings

The transnational meetings are assessed on average to be successful (M=2,0; i.e. "successful"). 13 persons assess them as "successful" and three as "completely successful", three persons assess them as only "partly successful", though. This vote is slightly better than in 2006 (M=2,3).

Suggestions for making meetings more effective mostly refer to more time which is needed during meetings, especially for the work in working groups and a better preparation of meetings.

Other recommendations concerning the effectiveness of meetings are (random order):

- More exchange about the content of the different DP's.
- Project visits combined with discussion about policy and experiences
- Partners still have to improve the preparation of working sessions and meet the deadlines.
- maybe a general subdivision in "work"-meetings and "study"-visits
- to do all the homework between the meetings
- better preparation of workgroups
- present advancement of each workgroup to give larger space to the reflections about the results of work groups activities during the transnational meetings
- to make politicians conscious of what we are working on

Six answers reveal satisfaction with the TC meetings. The meetings are described as "effective", "positive", "productive" and "varied". One member states: "Every partner who has organized the meeting made this in a professional and friendly way". Another respondent notices a "smoother running of the TC meetings", ("the agenda allows more time for working groups"), one sug-

Survey (rating scale): Up to now, to what extent have the transnational meetings been successful?

Survey (question): In your opinion, what are further possibilities to make transnational meetings more effective?

gests to go on with the good habits (involvement, mixed methods).

7.3.1.5 Steering

The steering of the network is done conjointly by every partner. Decisions concerning the whole partnership are generally made together with all participants of the transnational meetings. The secretary is alternating. Each partner commits oneself to this task for the time span of half a year. The steering of the network is therefore difficult to grasp with the existing evaluation instruments. Shown in the qualitative answers two members of the TC suggest choosing only one DP as secretary for the whole project time, respectively "a centralisation towards one responsible person or organisation".

However, the confidence between the partners is evaluated as strong (M=2,2). This can be taken as a good sign for an adequate steering. The majority (10 persons) agrees and two people completely agree to this statement. Four members only partly agree though and one person does not agree. Surprisingly, compared to the results of the first survey, a slight decline in the mutual trust between the partners seems to become apparent. (2006: M= 1,9).

Steering: How effective or efficient is the steering of the network?

7.3.1.6 Needs or Requirements

Asked for current needs in the TC work proposals and suggestions can be divided into the following categories: a) Suggestions for the workgroups, b) suggestions regarding the organisation of work and processes, c) mainstreaming and d) general remarks.

Regarding the **workgroups** one respondent desires "a greater engagement of the partners in the activities of the work groups". Other comments are as follows:

- Better goals for the workgroup
- Better preparation of workgroups
- Enhance transparency about advancement of each workgroup
- Give larger space to the reflections about the results of work groups activities

Regarding the **organisation** of work, four persons mention the completion of final documents and products. One person suggests giving an overview of the objectives

Survey (question): In your opinion, what are current needs or requirements for the progress of the transnational work?

(products) and the actual status. For this purpose a folder could be organised. Minutes should be written and circulated to all partners right after the meetings, so that everybody has insight into work plan and decisions. Homework should be done between the meetings.

One important proposal is to focus on **mainstreaming** e.g. raise the consciousness of politicians.

Furthermore, **general remarks** concerning current needs are

- more time/ more meetings/more communication (12 times mentioned)
- more involvement (3 times mentioned)

7.3.2 Part II – Goals

By means of four ratings the partners give a general impression how the aims of the TC are being met. Compared to the results of the last survey, positive trends can be shown regarding the benefit, implemented ideas and further changes that have been triggered through the TC work.

As expected, all partners agree having gained new information through the partnership (mean of all partners, like in 2006 M=1,5).

Six persons agree having benefited from the experience of their transnational partners, 10 completely agree and two agree partly. (M=1,6). This vote is slightly better than in 2006 (M=2,0)

15 respondents claim to have already implemented ideas gained through the TC (M=1,9). Further development regarding the implementation can be shown compared to the results of the first round in 2006 (M=2,4).

There are relatively high variations (range) concerning the statement "the implemented ideas have already left their marks or triggered further changes in the DP work".

Four persons completely agree, seven agree, five agree partly, one doesn't agree and one respondent doesn't agree at all. (M= 2,3). Compared to the results of the last survey (M=2,9), a positive trend can be shown.

According to the evaluation questions the following action objectives have been specified and therefore are object to examination.

Evaluation question: Do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level? (II.a)

7.3.2.1 General Action Objectives

One question is concerned with the use of the internet portal. As described above, six persons use this tool several times monthly (33%), three once a month three (17%) and nine irregularly (50%).

The “irregulars” gave the following statements to explain why they don't use the portal more often (random order):

- E-mail with the specific person is more effective
- Only to prepare transnational meetings
- In my organisation, I have a very busy job; I have the fidelity that the coordinator of the DP uses the internet portal
- No use for my TCA work
- With some (geogr.) close partners direct contacts through e-mail and telephone are the best communication tools, while the work with other partners does not go beyond the work fixed in the schedule of TC and thus does not require a regular use of the portal.
- I mainly communicate via phone and e-mail. I use it only when our DP edits a new document or when a partner informs me that some important file is available. I check from time to time, if there is any updated document or new information saved on the portal.
- Because we agreed (at least in my workgroup) to concentrate the exchange of information and documents on the month before the next meeting. In this case irregularly has no bad meaning, the other time span options don't suit to our needs.
- scarce knowledge of the linguistic instruments
- lack of time

Action objective: The member area of the internet portal is used regularly by all transnational partners for the exchange of information. (all partners)

7.3.2.2 Action Objectives and Status of the Working Groups (April/May 2007)

Working group “Flexible Models of Childcare”. By the time of the Follow-Up in April/May (before the meeting in Vilnius) according to five members of the workgroup, the questionnaire is 100% ready, three members vote for 75-99%. The questionnaire is available in the member area of the internet portal and gives an overview of the different methods and settings of flexible childcare (five members vote for 75%-99% and one for 100%). All partners have answered the questionnaire, (according to three members not up to 100%, but 75-99%). The results are

Action objectives: Work group ‘Flexible models of childcare’ (Coordinator: Luxembourg, joined by all partners):

Around the theme ‘Flexible models of childcare’ a questionnaire of ten questions is worked out until December 2006.

Each partner of the transnational co-operation answered the questionnaire about ‘Flexible models of childcare’ until July 2006.

published in a long version (before the meeting in Vilnius) and in a short version, which has been finished during the meeting in Vilnius. Considering the action objective, the workgroup achieved its goal to work out the questionnaire, but it is not clear if the deadline December 2006 has been met.

Quality criteria are in process. Quality criteria in Belgium (Dutch and French part) are available in the "Development folder" of the work group in the portal. An electronic brochure/ document is being adapted.

Working group “Child minders profession”. By the time of the Follow-Up in April/May, the definition of child minders profession is in process. The comparison scheme is being adapted. Regarding the comparison of standards for the training of the child minders profession three members vote for 25-49% and three for 50-74%.

Out of 18 respondents, 10 state that they have been informed about the availability of the common scheme on the internet portal, two have filled in the common scheme but five do not know anything about the status of the comparison.

Five members of the working group describe further steps to finish the comparison. There are two persons responsible for the further working out until the meeting in May 2007. A standard document has been developed, and two partners have already filled in the training framework. It was planned that every national DP should finish the tasks and to focus on the comparison itself during the meeting in Vilnius. Considering the action objectives, the definition and the comparison scheme should have been ready until 2006.

Working group “Gender Screening Instrument”. By the time of the Follow-Up in April/May, the gender screening instrument has been tested, whereas there are different opinions about the status. Three members opt for 100%, one for 75-99% and one for 50-74%. Comments of three members highlight the actual working progress. "Only Belgian, Luxembourg and Germany want to test the screening instrument. Luxembourg and Belgium have tested it already, Germany will test it in autumn this year", "in fact it has been tested. As this has been successful, further steps are planned i.e. Transla-

Existing quality criteria for flexible childcare structures are translated (until July 2006).

Action objectives: Work group ‘Child minders profession’ (Coordinator: Italy, joined by Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium/nl):

The definition of the ‘child minders’ profession is overviewed until September 2006

By means of a common scheme the differing standards concerning the training for the ‘child minders’ profession are compared until December 2006.

Action objectives: Work group ‘Gender screening instrument’ (Coordinator: Belgium/nl, joined by Luxembourg)

The gender instrument developed in Flanders is tested out by the participating partners until 2006.

Gender-pitfalls and the ways to handle them are compared until 2006.

tion and publication (printed version) in Germany and France". Regarding the action objective to test the instrument until 2006, a delay can be noticed.

There will be a training for handling the screening instrument in the different countries in summer this year. Due to one respondent, the Gender-pitfalls and the ways to handle them are compared.

Working group "DVD". The working group achieved its objective to produce a DVD until the end of 2006. By the time of the Follow-Up in April/May, the film (DVD) "Childcare Stories" is finished (since September 2006). The film is ready in French, German, English, Dutch and Italian (not in Lithuanian language). There are already 1300 copies distributed and another 1300 orders. Ideas for using the film in training situations can be found on the internet portal.

Working group "Integrated Services". In order to collect information about the status of the working group "Flexible Childcare", a short questionnaire was distributed to three members during the meeting in Vilnius on May 23. By the time of the meeting the international examples of good practice are worked out and written down in a report. Two members opt for 100% ready (since March 2007), one for 75%-99%. Further steps to finish this product are: to write a conclusion, layout, printing, other decisions for publication. The report is available for all partners in the member area of the internet portal. This means the report is finished, but the deadline has not been met exactly.

The brochure about "Integrated services" is not published yet but will be quite soon (finalisation during the meeting). The country reports will be published by the end of year in a book version (translated into German). Regarding the action objective, there is a delay of approx. two months.

Action objectives: Work group 'Film (DVD) about the advantages of services' (Coordinator: Belgium/nl, joined by Germany and Luxembourg)

A DVD is produced that can be used by intermediary groups to inform parents of ethnic minorities or disadvantaged groups about the opportunities created by services for young children until 2006

Action objectives: Work group 'Integrated services' (Coordinators: Germany and Lithuania, joined by Italy, Luxembourg and Belgium/nl)

International examples of good practice of "Integrated services" are worked out and written down in a report until 2006

A brochure/ electronic document about "integrated services" is published until March 2007

8 Final Partner Survey in Autumn 2007: Data Basis and Results

presented by Dörte Schott

8.1 Data Sources and Information Basis

The first step of the last evaluation round is based on the visits or telephone interviews of the work groups. Three work groups (1, 4 and 9) could be interviewed on the transnational meeting in Gent. Amongst these has been work group 9, which consists of the former work groups 2, 3 and 8. Work groups (6 and 7) did not meet in Gent, because their products have been finished beforehand. With two of three partners of both work groups interviews in written (by questionnaire) or oral (by telephone) form have been conducted.

Secondly the work groups have been asked to send descriptions of their products, i.e. to fill in the respective form.

Finally the partners have been asked to fill out a partner survey questionnaire (third step). On the 09th of October 2007 an e-mail with the Partner Survey Questionnaire was sent to the evaluation contact persons. They were asked to forward the questionnaire to up to three further persons of their Developmental Partnership that have been involved in the transnational work. Furthermore they were asked to fill out the questionnaire themselves and to send it back until the 24th of October 2007.

On the 24th of October a reminder e-mail was sent. The deadline was extended once until the 30th of October 2007.

Altogether 13 questionnaires have been answered and sent back. Two partners sent only one questionnaire due to illness in the team. The other partners answered two to three questionnaires. The evaluator has to point out, that there is a risk of bias due to those single answers.

8.2 Data Analysis

For the qualitative analysis – including for instance all text answers of the partner survey – the answers of people belonging to one country are treated as belonging to one of the six partners. This is to provide for equality among the partners in this summative report.

Partner Survey: If not otherwise identified in the text, the quantitative items are five-step rating scales: I completely agree (1) – I agree (2) – I partly agree (3) – I don't agree (4) – I don't agree at all (5). For the quantitative analysis of these rating scales the questionnaires are subsumed and calculated as one questionnaire for each transnational partner.

Two of the interviewees assess their English language skills to be basic, eleven as advanced and two as excellent.

8.3 Results

All in all the Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare' is being evaluated as a great success by the participating partners. All partners are very satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation (M=1,06). On the basis of repeated measurement a positive development of satisfaction in the course of the co-operation can be shown (Figure 1). Although satisfaction has been high in the beginning.

Network quality is evaluated as being between high and very high.

Network Quality

Survey (rating scale): Altogether, are you satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare'? (4 step rating scale: very satisfied - rather satisfied - rather not satisfied - not satisfied at all)

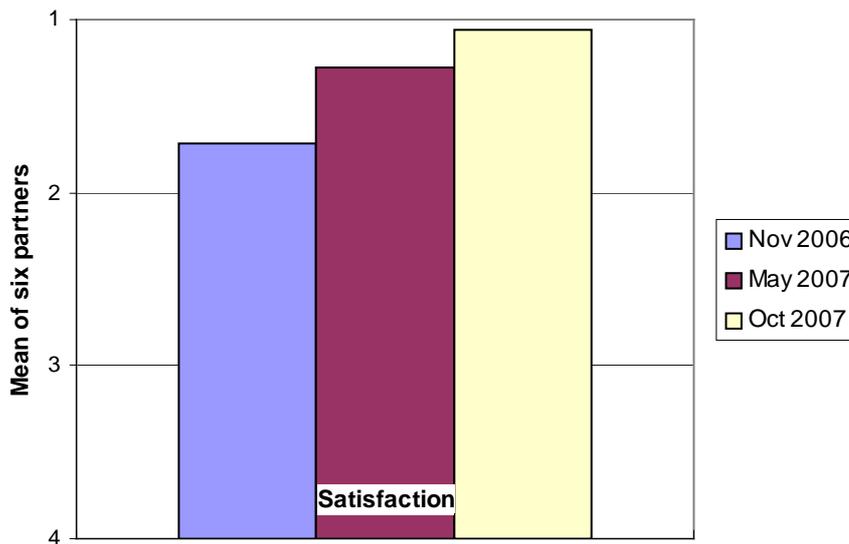


Figure 1: Satisfaction with the Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare'

By the end of the Transnational Co-operation the intermediary aim of product development has been fully met. The intermediary aim of information and experience exchange is assumed to be met as all partners state to have implemented gained information and experiences in their national projects. The action objectives of mainstreaming are supposed to be met by the end of the partnership as well, except the one of work group 9 that is scheduled for March 2008. All partners plan to continue with mainstreaming activities beyond 2007.

Achievement of goals

Original action objectives of the transnational co-operation and work groups have been merely slightly adapted under way according to emerging needs and conditions.

Asked for their lessons learned the partners bring up roughly as many items that have been done very well as items that could be improved in future projects, which reflects a balance of fair comments and praise.

Lessons Learned

8.3.1 Goal of Product Development

By the end of the Transnational Co-operation the intermediary aim of product development has been fully met. The intended products are developed and are currently planned to be burned on a CD by January 2008 for coming mainstreaming activities.

Evaluation Question II.b: To what extent do the transnational partners jointly develop methodologies, approaches or products and use them in their DP work?

Work groups 6 and 7 had finished their products before the final evaluation round began in September/ October.

8.3.1.1 Work Group 1 'Flexible Models of Childcare'

Work group 'Flexible Models of Childcare' has developed a country report in English, a short version of the document 'Flexibility in Childcare', and additionally a document/synthesis of main quality criteria of flexible childcare structures, which will be finished in November 2007. The electronic document is planned to be published on a CD-ROM.

Interview: What are the results of the collaboration in the workgroup? What products/ methodologies/ approaches have been developed? Work group 1 'Flexible models of childcare'

After the definition of objectives questions for the questionnaire were formulated. The next step included the completion of the questionnaire; afterwards the questionnaire has been adjusted and revised. During the discussion, the workgroup realised the importance of quality criteria. Therefore a supplementary product about quality criteria has been developed out of two existing products in the partner countries. Those two products have been translated and merged. A short synthesis has been translated into English. Finally a summary, an introduction and a conclusion have been written. Dissemination has already partly been done in Lithuania.

*Work Process
Interview: What have been major steps on your way?
Work group 1*

The report presents the organisation of flexible childcare services within the context of the European countries

Product Description given by the work group

involved in this research work (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg). It is completed by a list of quality criteria for flexible childcare structures.

The reader will be able to know and compare different forms and examples of flexible childcare services, including best practice examples from different countries. The targeted public are European, national, regional and local authorities, early childhood educators and social workers.

There has been a slight adaptation concerning the action objectives according to the prolongation of the national project QUALiflex. Secondly it has shown that a ranking of quality criteria is not possible in the work groups context. It is expected that all objectives are met by the end of this year.

The short version of the document 'Flexibility in Childcare' will be published in German and the Country Report will be used for a book about flexibility in childcare in Germany. The long version of the questionnaire has been translated into French and Lithuanian and is published in Lithuania.

According to the Luxembourgish team, there had already been a good contact to the family ministry before working in the transnational cooperation. Results of the working group have been used for a text in a manual about flexible childcare, which will be published by the Luxembourgish Family Ministry. Actually, the ministry asked the Luxembourgish team for an article about the topic.

In all national contexts, the gained knowledge and expertise of circumstances in other partner countries can be used to make professionals aware of their own situation and to sensibilise politicians.

8.3.1.2 Work Group 4 'Integrated Services'

Work group 'Integrated Services' developed a questionnaire and a joint report based on the collected answers to the questionnaire. The electronic document is planned to be published on a CD-ROM in December 2007.

At first the questionnaire has been prepared and then revised. The next step implied the data collection. Differences in the data have been discussed as well as the best methods how to present the results. Additional re-

Comment on goals

Interview: In which way can the partners use the gained knowledge, experience or developed products (back in their home country)?

Work group 1

Interview: What are the results of the collaboration in the workgroup? What products/ methodologies/ approaches have been developed?

Work group 4 'Integrated Services'

Work Process

Interview: What have been major steps on your way?

Work group 4

sources brought in by the partners, made the text parts about the USA and Sweden possible.

In Childhood Education the term “Integrated Services” started to be used in several countries to describe different forms of collaboration among public, private, and voluntary providers of social services aimed at better addressing the needs of young children and their families. This report presents the organisation of childcare services and the development of different forms of integration within the context of the European countries involved in this research work (Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Belgium-nl) and some information about other countries (USA, Sweden).

The reader will be able to know and compare different forms and examples of Childcare Integrated Services, getting also background information about some European Childcare Systems. Targeted public are European, national, regional and local authorities, early childhood educators and social workers.

It is expected that all action objectives are met by the end of this year.

Solutions applied in the partner countries can be presented to politicians, moreover, arguments and recommendations from partners can be used in own (political) contexts.

Furthermore the products are intended to be used inside the own organisation, they are presented e.g. to colleagues and local partners, and they support the consultation process with service providers. According to the team, the gained knowledge and experiences help to clarify own ideas and to develop new ideas.

8.3.1.3 Work Group 6 ‘DVD Childcare Stories’

Work group ‘DVD’ has finished a film which is subtitled in five languages (English, French, German, Dutch and Italian). The DVD includes a documentary of 25 minutes and ten interviews. Furthermore for every interview there is a kind of brochure (in Dutch and in English), that helps to work with the target groups using the video.

Product Description given by the work group

Comment on goals

*Interview: In which way can the partners use the gained knowledge, experience or developed products (back in their home country)?
Work group 4*

*Interview: What are the results of the collaboration in the workgroup? What products/ methodologies/ approaches have been developed?
Work group 6 ‘DVD Childcare Stories’*

The Luxembourg and the German partners did their own research for the film. Then a film team shot the interviews in Luxembourg and Gelsenkirchen. For the editing the two partners came to Antwerp. The film was translated and the translations corrected by the partners.

Childcare Stories features the testimonies of 17 parents from different countries within the European Union. Their stories highlight the important role that childcare plays in the lives of both children and parents. For these parents coming from diverse backgrounds childcare is more than just minding their children whilst they are working. Parents are looking for a warm and caring place for their children and are also in search of childcare workers as equal partners in their children's development and education.

The viewer will receive an overview of the needs of parents (including parents looking for work, disadvantaged groups, ethnic minority groups) and be able to reflect views and opinions about the role of childcare. Targeted public are professionals (providers and employees in Childcare structures, family day carers, social and welfare workers), parents and trainers in the field of childcare.

The action objectives of this work group have been met.

The DVD is used for dissemination and mainstreaming: A training organisation, the main training center in Flanders and partner of the Belgian (nl) DP gives a whole day training session including the film.

8.3.1.4 Work Group 7 'Gender Screening Instrument'

The translation and adaptation of a brochure on the participation of fathers in child care centers, developed by the Belgian partner (Be-nl) is the product of work group 7 'Gender Screening Instrument'. It is now available in three languages: Dutch, German, French. It is a guide how to foster the participation of fathers in child care centres. It includes a text about the theoretical background of the problem, a self evaluation plan and an action plan.

Work Process

Interview: What have been major steps on your way?

Work group 6

Product Description given by the work group

Comment on goals

Interview: In which way can the partners use the gained knowledge, experience or developed products (back in their home country)?

Work group 6

Interview: What are the results of the collaboration in the workgroup? What products/ methodologies/ approaches have been developed?

Work group 7 'Gender Screening Instrument'

Existing documents have been translated and tested in childcare structures. After adaptation and correction the document was lectured by a member of Luxemburg's Ministry for EQUAL chances (Ministerium für Chancengleichheit). Her suggestions have been included. The document has been finished and is being mainstreamed at the moment.

Work Process

Interview: What have been major steps on your way?

Work group 7

The manual 'Gender Screening Instrument' contains information about the important role of fathers in the education of children, different forms helping to know to what degree fathers and mothers are involved in childcare structures and practical advice to improve the participation of fathers and mothers in childcare structures.

Product Description given by the work group

The objective is sensibilisation of professionals concerning the role of fathers in education and the role of fathers' and mothers' participation in childcare structures. It makes gender aspects visible in services for young children. Targeted public are professionals, i.e. providers and employees in childcare structures, family day carers and trainers in the field of childcare.

The action objectives of this work group have been met.

Comment on goals

The 'Gender Screening Instrument' can be used by the Dutch, French and German partners for quality management in childcare structures as well as for training sessions for family day carers, educators etc.

Interview: In which way can the partners use the gained knowledge, experience or developed products (back in their home country)?

Work group 7

8.3.1.5 Work Group 9 'Training-professionalisation and accreditation'

Work group 9 includes the coordinators of the former work groups 2, 3 and 8 and Luxembourg (namely the DP's Ecce Ama, Une ardeur d'enfance, COPIN and QUALiflex). Altogether, four documents have been developed in work group 9. They include a "Country Report" (report on professionalisation in child care professions in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Luxembourg), one brochure on "Professionalisation" (former work group 8), one brochure on "Accreditation of Prior Learning" (former work group 3, French Belgium) and a comparison of trainings (former work group 2).

Interview: What are the results of the collaboration in the workgroup? What products/ methodologies/ approaches have been developed?

Work group 9 'Training-professionalization and accreditation of prior learning in the field of childcare professions'

During the last meeting in Vilnius on 23-25 May 07, the participants decided to set up one joint working group.

Work Process

Workgroups 2 (Child Minders Profession) 3 (Prior Learning Experiences), and 8 (Report on Professionalisation) have been merged and products have been put together. In order to achieve the goals, two intermediate transnational one-day meetings were added to the Improving Childcare's agenda. Some of the members of the work group met in Belgium twice (in Marloie on 4th July 2007 and in Brussels on 13rd November 2007). In addition, some partners organized an additional working day during the transnational meeting in Gent (25th September 2007).

Interview: What have been major steps on your way?

Work group 9

Three themes have been initially treated and coordinated individually by 3 different groups (2, 3 and 8): a) comparing training paths in the field of childcare, b) research into professionalisation in childcare in Europe, c) creating an "interview-manual" (a questionnaire and its guidelines) regarding the accreditation of prior learning in family day care. Work group 9 presents the results (products) in a joint document entitled "Perspectives on care work with young children".

Product Description given by work group 9

The objective is to enable the reader to understand some of the key elements of childcare work. Targeted public are European, national, regional and local authorities, social workers, practitioners, childcare providers and researchers.

Work group 2 'Comparison of trainings in the field of child minders and auxiliary workers' aimed at collecting information about job profiles and training paths of child care workers (in-home and collective childcare services for children from 0 to 3 years old) in the partner countries and at developing a common methodological approach as well as practical intervention tools. On the basis of national job and competence profiles relevant training paths are analysed with a particular attention to the education and training systems. The comparative study of these training paths helped to formulate an improvement hypothesis which could be transferred to policy makers in each partners' country.

Product Description given by work group 2

The objective is to compare the differences existing within the childcare sector. Targeted public is everyone involved in childcare.

Work group 3 ‘Accreditation of prior learning experience’. The concept of “accreditation of prior learning” (APL) is currently under discussion at European level. Many member states have changed or will change their vocational training system in this regard. By creating a questionnaire to identify, assess and acknowledge prior (formal and informal) learning (skills, experience and knowledge) within childcare, we can make an active contribution to this process (assessment tool available in French and English). However, it is important to mention that the method developed and tested by the DP “Une ardeur d’enfance” (French Community of Belgium) refers more to the ‘continuity’ in the process, rather than the concept of ‘recognition of acquired competences’(in the strict sense of the word) which has become a growing concern within the European Union and the member states in recent years (see European Qualification Framework).

The objective is to help social workers to identify an applicant’s or an active family day carer’s skills to facilitate and improve follow-up processes, and to help them create their portfolio. Targeted public is everyone involved in family day care.

Work group 8 ‘Report about professionalisation’ gives an overview of inspiring examples of professionalism in childcare in Europe. Quality of employment is central in the EU’s objective of becoming a knowledge-based economy. In many EU countries the present workforce in childcare is problematic, unsustainable and requires change. The member states must therefore reflect seriously on the type of profession they want in the early years.

The objective is to inspire policy makers, practitioners, childcare providers and researchers in constructing a world-class workforce for young children and their parents. Targeted public are policy makers, practitioners, childcare providers and researchers.

By the end of the Transnational Co-operation all goals of product development have been reached by the three work groups (2, 3 and 8). Additionally, the new joint work group 9 has produced a joint report “Perspectives on care work with young children”.

Product Description given by work group 3

Product Description given by work group 8

Comment on goals

For the Luxembourgish partners the work of the TC provides a good basis for the negotiation with politicians. Finding out and seeing differences in the involved countries are considered as an added value.

In Flanders the topic is actually on the political agenda. It is important to see and to compare the situation in other countries. Solutions and arguments from the partner countries can be used for own contexts.

During the discussion with the partners involved links between different topics have been discovered.

Interview: In which way can the partners use the gained knowledge, experience or developed products (back in their home country)?

Work group 9

8.3.1.6 Usability of Products in General

The developed products can be used by the partners a) for mainstreaming, lobbying or public relation activities, b) as tool or product in their national work, c) for training and teaching.

All six partners can use products for mainstreaming, lobbying or public relation activities. Four of the partners mention for instance the 'DVD' – to be used for mainstreaming and public relation activities. The 'gender instrument' is also used for public relation. Material like questionnaires of the work groups 'flexibilbe childcare' and 'integrated services' are used for a publication.

Survey (question): What can you use the developed products for? Please give two examples!

Five partners use the developed products in their DP work or work of their partner institutions. Some product like the 'gender instrument' can be used in the daily processes of childcare institutions. Other material like the document on 'flexible childcare' can be a starting point for further studies or national work, or is simply used as a source of information. Some products have to be adapted and transferred before they can be 'put into action' in another country.

Four partners want to use the products for (further) training of professionals and childcarers (e.g. 'gender instrument') or teaching of students (e.g. long version of document on 'flexible childcare') or for discussions with paedagogic staff ('DVD').

For further products that have not been finished yet, it may not be clear what they can or will be used for in the future.

8.3.2 Goal of Information and Experience Exchange

The intermediary aim of information and experience exchange is assumed to be met as all partners state to have implemented gained information and experiences in their national projects.⁵ On the basis of repeated measurement a positive development in the course of the co-operation can be shown (Figure 2).

Evaluation Question II.a: To what extent do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level?

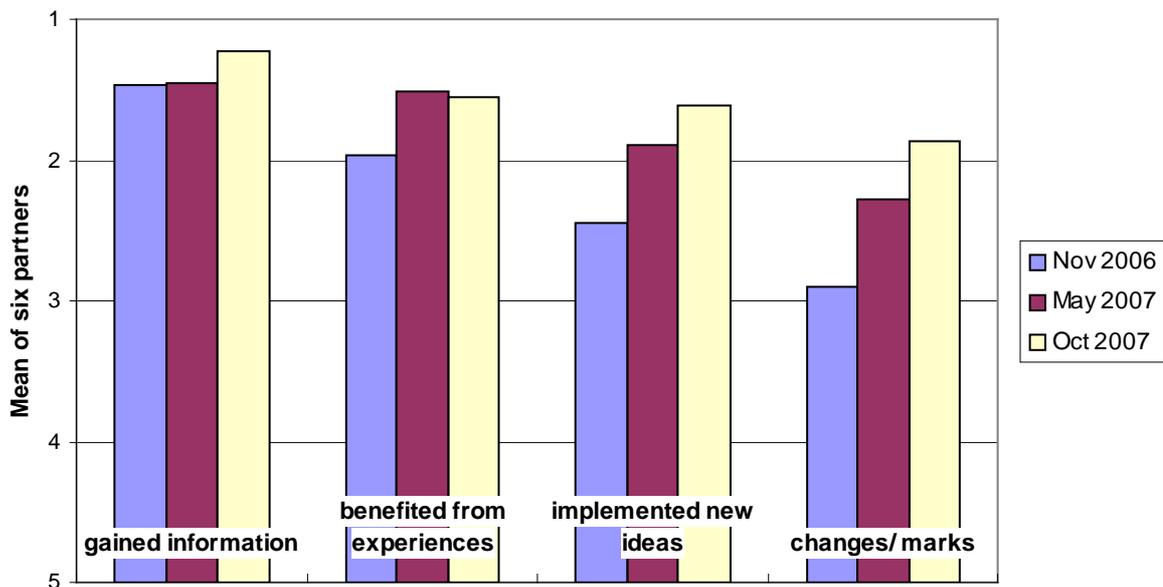


Figure 2: Information and experience exchange

The participants of the Partner Survey are asked to assess the results of the information and experience exchange on four five step rating scales. The average answer to all four items is positive or very positive. All partners have gained new information (M=1,22). All partners can at least partly benefit from the experiences of the partners (M=1,55). All partners have already implemented new ideas (M=1,61). And what is even more: All partners state that the new implemented ideas have already left their marks or triggered further changes in DP work (M=1,86).

Survey (rating scales): I have already gained new information through our Transnational Co-operation.

Our DP does benefit from the experiences of our transnational partners.

Our DP has already implemented ideas we had got through the TC.

The implemented ideas have already left their marks or triggered further changes in our DP work.

⁵ A deeper study concerning the fulfillment of respective action objectives has not been part of the final evaluation round.

Five of six partners state they can directly put experiences gained in the TC 'into action' in their national project/ DP or partner institutions and give examples (random order):

- Ideas of partner products helped us to build up our questionnaire about accreditation of prior learning experience developed within our national work
- Idea of gender activities to gain more male child minders and childcare workers
- Ideas for the development of a web-based "Resource Center" for the childcare sector
- Idea of flexible working hours and payment for childcare services
- Emilia Reggio Paedagogic to be implemented in childcare services
- E.g. some aspects of organisation and of administration of child care and educational services
- Ideas how flexibility and integration aspects can be put into practice
- Discussions and work group minutes as basis for a professional article
- Idea of Blended Learning in trainings for child minders
- Idea of the training for using the gender-instrument for childcare workers.

Survey (question): Is there any gained knowledge or experience that you can literally "put into action" back in your home country? Please give an example!

8.3.3 Goal of Mainstreaming

The action objectives of mainstreaming are supposed to be met by the end of the year, except the one of work group 9.⁶ The mainstreaming goal of work group 9 is scheduled for March 2008 because the national project of Belgium (nl) is running until Spring 2008 and Luxembourgish DP until end of 2008. However most work groups mention additional mainstreaming activities being planned to be conducted by their national projects during the following months.

Evaluation Question II.c: To what extent are professionals in the field, national authorities and decision makers in the EC politics informed about the concepts and products of the transnational co-operation?

Work group 1 'Flexible models of childcare'. In general the short version of the report on 'Flexibility in Child-

Interview: What/ how / to whom do you want to mainstream/ disseminate?

⁶ A deeper study concerning the fulfillment of respective action objectives has not been part of the final evaluation round.

care' will be disseminated to politicians, the long version is more appropriate for professionals in the field. The products can be disseminated to other interested groups (e.g. students) as well.

QUALiflex Luxembourg uses articles and conferences for dissemination. They are in contact with the family ministry.

In the French speaking part of Belgium, the long version is used for both target groups: politicians and professionals. Positive effects on staff (childcare workers) have been noticed already.

In Germany, two dissemination events will take place. The target group are local authorities. An expert talk is planned. Another way to disseminate products and contents of the project is to use national and transnational websites. A presentation has already taken place. As a result the foundation 'Hans Böckler Düsseldorf' has shown some interest in the publication of a book and has given financial support.

The Lithuanian team reports about an exchange with important experts in the field. The work group results will be integrated in a new governmental programme. Two ministries and one parliament member have been reached already.

The countries Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium (nl) (work groups 1 and 4) organised a travelling conference in November 2006 concerning the subject of integrated and flexible childcare. It took place in Luxembourg, Brussels and Gelsenkirchen.

Work group 4 'Integrated Services'. Target groups of work group 4 are politicians, service providers, practitioners, professionals as well as school directors and school administration.

Until now, the topics have been promoted more informally. Official dissemination has not taken place yet, because the product has just been completed.

The countries Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium (nl) (work groups 1 and 4) organised a travelling conference (see above).

Work group 6 'DVD'. The DVD is already distributed in 2100 copies in Belgium, Germany and France. Together with the Italian edition there are 3100 copies. The Bel-

Which target groups / persons have been reached already? From whom have you got feedback already?

Work group 1 'Flexible models of childcare'

Interview: What/ how / to whom do you want to mainstream/ disseminate?

Which target groups / persons have been reached already? From whom have you got feedback already?

Work group 4 'Integrated Services'

Interview: What/ how / to whom do you want to mainstream/ disseminate?

gian (nl) partner and co-ordinator of the work group used his distribution system for that. The film has also been shown on conferences in many places: e.g. a conference about minorities/ ethnic groups in Bratislava, a conference for carers in Birmingham (12 countries represented like UK, Greece, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands), in New Zealand, in Ireland etc. (see appendix 'List of Dissemination Activities').

Work group 7 'Gender Screening Instrument'. Target groups for mainstreaming activities are professionals in the field of childcare (family day carers, childcare structures) and politicians (Ministry for Family; Ministry for EQUAL chances).

A few professionals have been reached already: The instrument is implemented in a few childcare structures.

The Luxembourgish Ministry for Family will publish a Quality Guide for flexible child care structures. By virtue of the gender screening instrument it is planned to include an article on men in child care written by Jan Peeters. Two conferences around "Men in Childcare" and the father instrument is being planned for Spring and Autumn 2008 (under the patronage of the Luxembourgish Family Ministry).

In Germany, Gelsenkirchen, a workshop with about 20 child carers took place to test and to disseminate the instrument (June, 2007). For the offer of further trainings more financial support is needed.

In Brussels a "Train the trainer" workshop has taken place in July 2007. (See also appendix 'List of Dissemination Activities').

Work group 9 'Training-Professionalisation and accreditation of prior learning'. There are three dissemination events planned in Flanders (Be-nl) in April 2008. Target groups are policy makers, trainers and childcare workers. Some results have already been discussed in the ministries.

In Luxembourg, the target groups are a consulting group for ministers, policy makers and employees in childcare. It is seen to be important to influence policy makers and to give support to employees in child care, support them in the field of prior learning and offer trainings in order to give them a perspective. Three ministries (e.g. school

Which target groups / persons have been reached already? From who have you got feedback already?

Work group 6 'DVD'

Interview: What/ how / to whom do you want to mainstream/ disseminate?

Which target groups / persons have been reached already? From who have you got feedback already?

Work group 7

Interview: What/ how / to whom do you want to mainstream/ disseminate?

Which target groups / persons have been reached already? From who have you got feedback already?

Work group 9 'Training-professionalisation and accreditation of prior learning'

ministry) have already been informed about the results. Target groups in Belgium (Fr) are policy makers (planned for February 08) and the childcare sector in general. They already received positive feedback during seminars. The target groups are waiting for final results.

8.3.4 Network Quality

The network quality is described as being between high and very high. On the basis of repeated measurement a positive development in the course of the co-operation can be shown (Figure 3), although network quality has been high in the beginning.

Every partner can benefit from the co-operation. The likelihood of long-lasting (personal) contacts is being assessed as very high. The willingness to plan new projects with these partners is high.

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent does the transnational partnership manage to build and develop a stable and performing network with common targets?

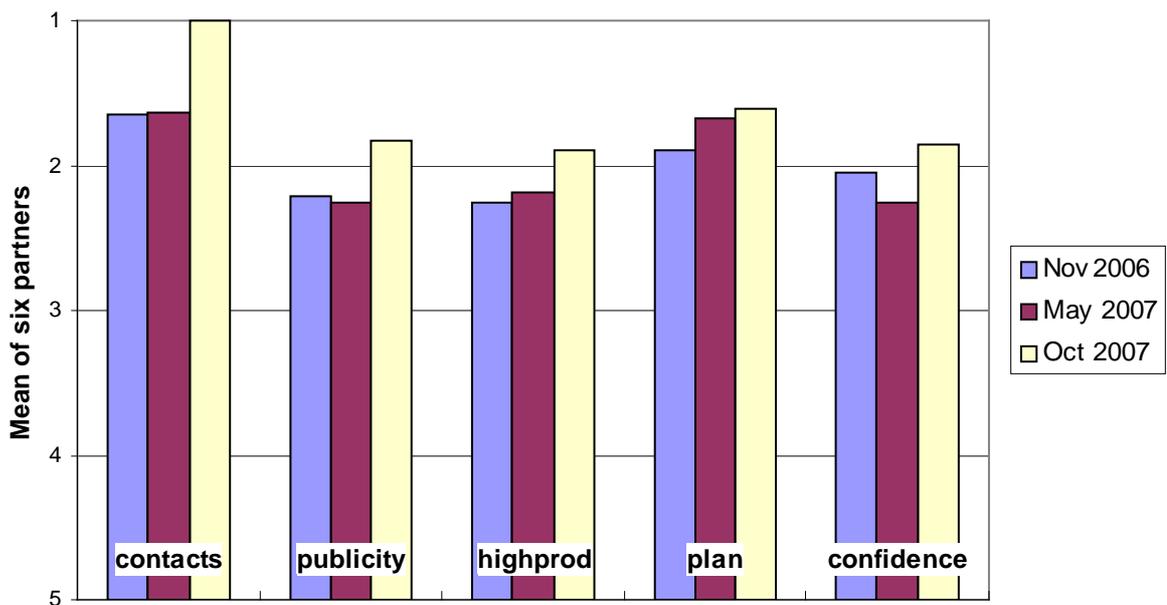


Figure 3: Network quality

The Partner Survey contained nine rating items concerning the network quality. According to the results of a reliability analysis (internal consistency) seven of these items are subsumed under a network index [network]:

- We can benefit from the contacts of our partners [contacts]

Survey: Network Index

- Our organisation is gaining publicity [publicity],
- The co-operation has been high-producing for us [highprod],
- I am willing to plan new projects [plan],
- Confidence between the partners is strong [confidence],
- I am planning to keep in touch with one or the other partner [keeptouch],
- I will certainly contact one or the other partner in the following years [followyears].

This network index is very positive (M=1,49) and has a relative low statistical spread (standard deviation SD=0,2). This means: All partners agree (completely) that the transnational network is an added value to their national work.

Asked for the benefits of the transnational co-operation the interviewees give lots of examples that can be subsumed under four categories (not put in any order):

- network/ contacts,
- information/ knowledge (good practice, different approaches, childcare systems, project management),
- experience/ confidence,
- tools and products (to develop, to adapt, to exchange).

All six partners have gained information or knowledge about good practice, different approaches, childcare systems or even project management. At least five of the partners state to benefit of the network and personal contacts – leading to possible co-operation in future projects or being a source of expert knowledge. Four of the partners put forward the exchange of products or tools as beneficial. Three of the six partners benefit from a growth of confidence and strength for future projects and national work.

8.3.4.1 Factors of success

There can be extracted six factors from the answers on what contributed to or what constrained the success of the transnational partnership (not put in any order):

- openness/ mood/ willingness
- organisational aspects
- effort/ engagement

Survey (question): What are the two biggest benefits you gained by participating in this Transnational Co-operation?

Survey (question): In your opinion, what circumstances have contributed to/ constrained the success of this Transnational Co-operation?

- competencies (including experience with transnational networks),
- (common) aims/ interests of the partners,
- language and cultural differences.

Most frequently mentioned are soft factors like openness/ willingness/ mood, followed by organisational factors, the input of effort/ engagement and the factor of aims/ interests. Last but not least there are several competencies mentioned as well as aspects of language/ culture. There are both positive and negative effects mentioned.

Having a closer look on how many partners support the different factors, again the soft factor plays a major role, but this time coequal with the factor competencies (mentioned by five partners each). The partners praise first of all the openness of all partners; furthermore the friendly atmosphere and good mood as well as everybody's wish or will to achieve something and to cooperate.

As to the competencies the quality/ know-how of the participating organisations and persons is put forward as contributing aspect as well as the mixture of practitioners and scientists. Merely the lack of experience with transnational cooperation and product development is mentioned as a negative aspect.

The other four factors are each mentioned by four of six partners. This shows that there is still a kind of mutual consent on the factors that played a major role for the success of the partnership. However the mentioned aspects differ.

Low language skills and lack of knowledge about the partner countries, for instance of the social and political structures would have hindered the working process. It is emphasised that all partners have to be able to communicate in one language at least. In contrast the engagement/ effort of all partners is mentioned as being very positive, except some exceeded deadlines in the first year.

The matters of common aims/ interests as well as organisational factors are more controversial. Whereas the good leadership in the whole and the good organisation in the partner DP's and of some work groups are brought in as being positive. Some waste of time, the lack of

budget, the difficulty to keep in touch with everybody, some reluctance to use the internet portal and one or the other activity without a clear understanding of the work to be done are mentioned on the negative side.

Aims and interests of the partners had obviously been partly in favour partly against the common goal as all the partners had a national project to run and therefore did not always have the capacity to engage fully. – Which is negative on the one hand and understandable on the other in the partner's eyes.

8.3.4.2 Changes in quality of the co-operation

Lots of positive feedback came on the change question: What have been considerable changes in the quality of co-operation (e.g. communication) over the last two years? Please read all assertions in Figure 4.

Survey (question): What have been considerable changes in the quality of co-operation (e.g. communication) over the last two years? Please describe them shortly!

Communication process is much more effective now than at the beginning.

It needed 3 to 4 meetings to better understand the different pedagogical approaches and the different legal frameworks in the various countries. Then, a substantive debate was possible.

In beginning the communication was quite slow, not respecting deadlines, but after 1st year of TC, the communication became better, more intensive and timely. The same people started to come to WG (in beginning was quite big fluctuation).

The quality of communication and trust among partners has evolved progressively over the last two years. The reasons are: mutual knowledge of contexts; common efforts to reach work groups' goals; will to communicate.

Better acquaintance and understanding through study visits --> Communication is more easy; Time-phased Net-Meetings between visits are helpful and effective [gist translated]

We merged together as a team and have build up a lot of faith to each other without competition

What have been considerable changes in the quality of co-operation (e.g. communication) over the last two years? Please describe them shortly!

In addition, I think that the first evaluation, that was not really good [as to the results], made all partners aware that we had to do efforts in order to improve our cooperation.

I entered the network only in December 2006. However, I have noticed a great evolution in terms of communication (more effective and more frequent).

For us, things were facilitated once we hired someone really fluent in English and competent for the transnational cooperation.

Content discussions were especially successful and satisfactory, where common items were created as the film "Childcare Stories" or the seminar on the "fathers brochure"

The mutual understanding, openness and willingness to work together were very good during all period of partnership, but it was mostly effective and constructive during the last half of the year, when we realised that we don't have time left, and still wanted to have a product of good quality.

Different cultures make people function differently and are a source of different attitude about how something should be done. 2 meetings are not sufficient to understand this completely and make of a work group a team. Now at the end it is easier.

Figure 4: Changes in quality of the co-operation

8.3.5 Lessons Learned

The Partner Survey included three questions concerning lessons learned, things proven to work out and what to do better next time. Numerous comments came on the subjects of a) planning and organisation and b) communication means. Further comments came on c) aims and contents of the co-operation as well as d) the problem of differing language and culture. The message to politicians and professionals in the field is: Such a transnational co-operation is very useful, because it is possible and necessary to learn from other European countries.

The most general but also very fundamental answers were:

- ‘It is a wonderful way to learn more about Europe – I gained a lot of experience for my work but also for my personal development.’
- ‘Evaluation can play a fundamental role in helping the partners get the most out of their experience.’
- ‘[It is important to] rely on the competence of the respective partner.’
- ‘We have to be really involved from the beginning.’

All in all there is such a lot of feedback, that it is necessary to concentrate in the following on the items mentioned repeatedly (please see appendix for the complete list of answers).

8.3.5.1 Plan/ Organisation

Concerning the planning and organisation of the partnership it is proven to work out:

- To have meetings in every partner country (mentioned by two partner countries)
- The organisation of meetings as a mixture of work (plenum plus work groups), visits and socialising (mentioned by two partner countries) – allowing to meet the work goals, to build up trust among the partners and to exchange information and experiences
- The alternating secretary system (mentioned by two partner countries)

In contrast there is at least one partner that prefers to have one organisation as coordinator for the whole time.

Survey (questions): Imagine you are starting again with this Transnational Co-operation! What would you do just the same, because it worked out this time?

Imagine you are starting again with this Transnational Co-operation! What would you do in a different way, because it didn't work out this time? Do you see a better way?

Beyond this, what are your lessons learned for future transnational co-operations you might take part in?

As to possible improvements in planning the following suggestions are made:

- To spend more time in work groups (mentioned by two partner countries), especially in the initial phase of the collaboration
- To take time to get to know each other (mentioned by two partner countries), also especially in the initial phase of the collaboration.

8.3.5.2 Communication (means)

Around communication and communication means the following means played a major role in feedback: work group, study visits and internet portal. Work groups are received positively (mentioned by 2 partner countries), especially if they lead to a product that can be used afterwards in the participating projects.

Three partners mentioned the study visits as proven to work out. One of them states additionally, ‘...early in the project and as many as possible: important to understand the partners work and how they feel about things...’.

As to the internet portal there are conflicting statements: In the opinion of two partners it has proven to work out, one of them wants to implement a chat room in it next time. Two other partners do not find the portal to have come out useful.

Additionally the evaluator asked the interviewees to state for each of the used communication means (see column on the right): In which contexts have they proven to be most appropriate? There have been built nine categories on the basis of the incoming answers (not put in any order):

- 1) to take decisions/ to discuss/ to plan
- 2) to exchange documents/ information
 - a. information and documents (electronic)
 - b. official documents, printed material
- 3) to monitor/ to organise
- 4) to meet/ address/ get to know people
- 5) to work together
- 6) to mainstream/ to promote/ to lobby
- 7) to learn about (the contexts of) the partner projects/ countries
- 8) for transparency or to get/ give an overview about the

Survey (question): In which contexts have the following means of communication proven to be most appropriate?

- a) meetings in our work groups
- b) study visits
- c) conferences (as in Luxembourg)
- d) the member area of the internet portal
- e) e-mails
- f) mail
- g) internet chat, netmeeting etc.

activities

9) fast and personal mode of communication.

Table 1 shows what the partners think which communication means has proven to be appropriate to do what in this transnational co-operation.

Table 1: Appropriate communication means

	work groups	study visits	conferences	internet portal	e-mails	mail	chat, netmeeting
1) to take decisions/ to discuss/ to plan	x	(x)			(x)		x
2.a) to exchange information and documents (electronic)	x			x	x		
2.b) to exchange official documents, printed material						x	
3) to monitor/ to organise	(x)				x		(x)
4) to meet/ to address/ to get to know people	x	(x)	x				
5) to work together	x				x		(x)
6) to mainstream/ to promote/ to lobby			x	x			
7) to learn about (the contexts of) the partner projects/ countries		x	x				
8) for transparency or to get/give an overview about the activities				x	(x)		
9) as fast and personal mode of communication					x		

Legend:

- x** proposed by at least three of six partners
- x proposed by more than one partner
- (x) proposed by one partner only

The table shows clear preferences of certain communication means for particular tasks. Examples are: To learn about the partner projects and countries study visits are definitely the best means, but also conferences can be useful to do that. Work groups and e-mails are useful for a plurality but not for similar tasks: Work groups are the best means for the actual work to be done together. For discussion, planning and decision taking you can use work groups but also a chat or netmeeting. E-mails are

most appropriate for the exchange of information and documents, for organisational questions or the monitoring of activities. For personal and urgent matters e-mails have proven to be appropriate, too. The internet portal as well is useful for a variety of things: it is most appropriate for the exchange of information and documents (as e-mails), but also for transparency in the partnership and mainstreaming activities.

8.3.5.3 Aims/ Contents

Two of the partners consent in suggesting more basic but concrete goals for the work groups, for instance to test or utilise a best practice product of one partner in the other partner's projects.

8.3.5.4 Language/ Culture

Concerning the language three partners point out, that there has to be one language at least, in which all partners can easily communicate with each other. It is important that at least one person of each participating Developmental Partnership can speak the main language of the Transnational Partnership fluently.

Twice it is mentioned, that it is important to clarify terms and concepts (right in the beginning), because of different meanings and backgrounds (e.g. political and social context) in the partner countries.⁷

8.3.5.5 Message to politicians and professionals

Four of the six partners would like to confirm the initiators of the EQUAL Initiative and other politicians that transnational co-operation is very useful and an added value. It helps getting to know and to adapt good practice models and opens the minds. Two partners point out, that transnational exchange is a good way to develop (common) strategies of solution, because problems are similar. Two partners state, that it is possible and necessary to learn from each other.

Two other address the need for assistance: in the con-

*Survey (question): What are your major lessons learned you would like to pass on as a message to professionals and politicians?
Message to politicians*

⁷ The fact that same words often have different meanings bears the risk of misunderstandings. This has been realised by the partners during the work on concrete products. Assumably it would not always be possible to prevent this kind of misunderstandings in advance. This is enhanced by language problems that make elaboration of terms and concepts even more difficult. It has been realised too, that every misunderstanding brings the chance of learning effects.

ceptual phase or with organisational aspects – possibly by some EQUAL staff.

The message to professionals is to open the minds to diversity issues and the European context (mentioned by three partners).

Message to professionals

9 Conclusions

The Transnational Partnership 'Improving Childcare' (EQUAL II) has been very enriching for every participating partner. They achieved a high level of network quality and satisfaction and were very successful in reaching their goals. This means on one hand that objectives have been realistic and could be met in the course of the transnational co-operation and on the other that hard work has been done.

The Transnational Co-operation 'Improving Childcare' is being evaluated as a great success by the participating partners. All partners are very satisfied with the Transnational Co-operation. On the basis of repeated measurement a positive development of satisfaction in the course of the co-operation can be shown, although satisfaction has been high in the beginning.

Three of four evaluation questions were the subject to examination in the course of the external evaluation of 'Improving Childcare'. The focus in the formative part was on the question of information and experience exchange. The focus of the summative part was on the development of products. The question of mainstreaming which had initially been chosen for the summative part, was changed in favour of product development in summer 2007 by the partners of 'Improving Childcare'. That's why mainstreaming activities are shortly described in the report but not evaluated more deeply.

An outcome concerning the persons involved in transnational work can be assumed on the basis of their self information. Also an impact on the level of the national projects can be suggested. To assess outcomes and possible impacts concerning the target groups of the national projects a subsequent study would be needed.

9.1 Goals

In their vision the transnational partners agree to import, export or adopt new approaches in the field of childcare. Furthermore decision makers in EC politics, national authorities and professionals in the field shall be enabled to make use of the jointly developed approaches.

In the beginning of the project period the partners agreed on a goal system. Here several action objectives were defined, which belong to the intermediary aims of information and experience exchange, product development and mainstreaming. The partnership has been very successful in reaching their action objectives – apart from some delays concerning the original deadlines (as found for instance in the first evaluation round). Original action objectives of the transnational co-operation and work groups have been merely adapted slightly under way according to emerging needs and conditions.

To what extent do the transnational partners gain new information and experiences through the collaboration and use them to improve work or concepts on DP level?

The exchange of information and experiences was subject to the formative evaluation in autumn 2006 and spring 2007. The aim of information and experience exchange has been met to a high degree. A repeated measurement of four respective items in October 2007 shows: There has been a lively exchange of information and experiences. All partners state to have implemented gained information and experiences in their national projects and that transnational co-operation left marks in the DP work. And there has been a positive development in the course of the co-operation.

To what extent do the transnational partners jointly develop methodologies, approaches or products and use them in their DP work?

Especially the aim of product development was the object of evaluation end of 2007. All intended products were developed, additionally even a further report – developed by three of the original work groups together. According to their self information the partners do use or are at least plan to use the products in the national work.

Childcare experts have to be asked for an appreciation and validation regarding the content and sense of developed products, if needed. This step would have exceeded the evaluation budget as different priorities had been set by the partnership.

To what extent are professionals in the field, national authorities and decision makers in the EC politics informed about the concepts and products of the transnational co-operation?

The action objectives of mainstreaming are supposed to be met by the end of the partnership except the one of work group 9 that is scheduled for March 2008. All partners plan to continue with mainstreaming activities beyond 2007.

9.2 Network and Lessons Learned

The network quality is evaluated as being high or very high. On the basis of repeated measurement a positive development in the course of the co-operation can be shown. Although network quality has been high from the beginning.

Asked for their lessons learned the partners bring up a balanced mix of fair comments and praise. Planning and organisation of the TC and the use of communication means play a major role in feedback.

The message to politicians and professionals in the field is: Such a transnational co-operation is very useful, because it is possible and necessary to learn from other European countries.