# Reflections on the effectiveness of territorial cooperation networks arising under the Community Initiative EQUAL

Cinta Concepción García-Vázquez, Ignacio Tejera Arcenillas

# *REFLECTIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TERRITORIAL COOPERATION NETWORKS ARISING UNDER THE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE EQUAL*

**Cinta Concepción García-Vázquez**
Observatorio Local de Empleo. UHU.
cinta.garcia@decd.uhu.es

**Ignacio Tejera-Arcenillas**
Observatorio Local de Empleo. UHU.
ignacio.tejera@dege.uhu.es

**Summary:** This paper reflects on the life of the networks that are configured under the EQUAL Community Initiative, as well as the potential catalytic effect it has had in the stabilization of such networks on territorial cooperation and the networking systems beyond the project life. Arises, the importance of analyzing the networks created to know to what extent the characteristics of your configuration and development influence the stability of them over time.

**Resumen**: Este documento realiza una reflexión sobre la vigencia de las redes que se configuraron al amparo de la Iniciativa Comunitaria EQUAL, así como sobre el posible efecto catalizador que ésta ha tenido en la estabilización de dichas redes de cooperación territorial y en los sistemas de trabajo en red más allá de la vida de los proyectos. Se plantea, así, la importancia de analizar las redes creadas para conocer en qué medida las características de su configuración y desarrollo influyen en la estabilidad de las mismas a lo largo del tiempo.

**Keywords**: partnership, governance, networks, sustainable development, territorial intelligence

**Palabras clave**: partenariado, gobernanza, redes de cooperación, desarrollo sostenible, inteligencia territorial

# Reflections on the effectiveness of territorial cooperation networks arising under the community initiative equal

## 1. INTRODUCTION.

The necessary involvement of regional players in the design and implementation of public policies for finding solutions to problems that arise in the context of welfare states, is setting up a new framework that tends toward the development of so-called Relational States, which are based on the principle of shared responsibility and public-private cooperation.

The active participation of the actors operating in the territory in sight, therefore, as a fundamental requirement in the cycle of public policy. In this line, and within the European Union, approved the White Paper on European Governance (COM, 2001) which emphasizes the importance of promoting good governance as a key element, so as to increase the involvement of regional administrations, local and urban community organizations and / or volunteers and citizens in the design and implementation of public policies.

It is in this context that the "partnerships" will play a prominent role. These are defined as "forms of collaboration where two or more independent public and private organizations voluntarily collaborate jointly developing products and / or services and sharing risks, costs and benefits" (Klijn and theism, 2003). Characteristic features presented by these partnerships tend to be:

- Nature cooperative.
- Requirement that the partnership produces mutual benefits.
- Risk sharing.
- Quality - price from the perspective of the taxpayer.
- Joint investment of resources.
- Shared Authority

In line with these precepts, the European Union promotes the EQUAL Community Initiative, funded by the European Social Fund for 2001-2006, which affects transnational cooperation in the innovative and demonstration projects, equal opportunities for men and women and the transfer of good practices to the general policies. The value added of this Initiative is to make visible the Community action developed through a partnership board, an integrated approach.

EQUAL is designed as a tool to fight discrimination in the labor market and creates new work systems based on inter-agency cooperation at both sectoral and territorial. Institutional collaboration and training thus become pillars that should inspire all projects, and are articulated through the creation of DPs as drivers of the same organizations, promoting equal participation in decision-making and implementation of actions.

In practice and based on the assessment by the Department of Community Initiatives and Programs Andalusian Employment Service of the Junta de Andalucía (institutional cooperation networks. Evaluation of the Equal experience in Andalusia 2007.) Cooperation networks created under EQUAL, with the participation of public and private entities, promoting new work dynamics and designed tools that tried to respond to the principle of good governance. Thus, all the projects executed are extracted multitude of models of cooperation that constitute a true test in this area.

EQUAL projects also point out the need for new assessment systems that would accommodate this new system of work because, beyond evaluating the projects themselves, it was necessary to evaluate the communication processes and decision-making followed within the Development Partnerships.

## 2. THE EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY AND THE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE EQUAL.

The concern of the European Union employment policy began in 1993, which publishes the Delors Report, which soon took the name of the Delors White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, which attempted to analyze the challenges enter the XXI century. This paper argues that "Nothing would be more dangerous for Europe to maintain our structures and feeding habits of resignation, passivity and egoism. The awakening of a society requires activated citizens aware of their responsibilities and in the spirit of solidarity with those that integrate with local and national communities, with its rich history and sense of belonging. (Libro Blanco sobre crecimiento, competitividad y empleo 1993: preámbulo).

In 1995, the Essen European Council invites the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labour and the ECOFIN Council and the Commission to undertake a close monitoring of employment trends, examine the relevant policies of the United members and report annually to the European

Council from December of that year, on progress in the labor market. It is configured so-called strategy of Essen (1995).

In 1997, following the introduction of the new title "Employment" in the Treaty on European Union, launched the European Employment Strategy (EES) at the European summit in Luxembourg. It seeks to coordinate national policies on employment, and establishes a multilateral system for monitoring employment policies of Member States in order to promote more effective policies in this area. The EES is articulated through the guidelines of employment must be the basis for Member States to develop national plans, focusing on four pillars:

a) Employability: combating long term unemployment and youth unemployment, the modernization of education and training, active monitoring of the unemployed by offering them a choice in the field of education or employment, the reduction early school leavers by 50%, and the establishment of a framework agreement between employers and social partners for companies involved in the training and the acquisition of experience.

b) Entrepreneurship: the implementation of clear, stable and reliable for the creation and management of businesses and simplifying the administrative requirements for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

c) Adaptability: the modernization of the organization and flexibility of labor contracts and the development of adaptable to different types of work, support of training within companies through the elimination of tax obstacles and mobilizing public support to improve competence of the workforce, creating sustainable jobs and effective functioning of the labor market.

d) Equal opportunities: the fight against the differences between men and women and greater use of the latter, by implementing policies of failure of the occupation, parental leave, working part-time and quality services for the care of children. The EES also proposes to Member States to facilitate return to work, particularly for women.

The EES also introduces a new method of work, the open method of coordination (OMC), which sets quantitative targets and common European surveillance applies promoted at EU level through the exchange of experiences. This system is particularly relevant in that, not only serves the political debate at different levels, but specifically encourages that "actions taken in the field of employment are consistent with the areas close to

employment, such as social policy, education, taxation, enterprise policy and regional development ", so that raises an integrated approach to public policy.

It is in this framework that sets the EQUAL Community Initiative as a tool to combat discrimination of all kinds in the labor market.

EQUAL Community Initiative is sponsored by the Employment European Social Fund 2001-2006, and according to the principles stated in its institutional and regulatory framework, is a testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivering policies employment in order to combat discrimination and inequality experienced by those seeking to enter the labor market and those already within it.

It is essential to understand in depth this community initiative, understand and adhere to the principles that must be present in the planning, implementation and evaluation, and throughout the implementation process for holding EQUAL projects. Only in this way we can understand the reasons why these projects can be useful beyond the direct impact they have on people. Thus, the fundamental principles of EQUAL are:

- Complementarity: Impact of the project on policy areas not covered by the general policies avoiding overlap with the resources and / or existing services.
- Institutional collaboration and training. Working model based on close cooperation between institutions of different nature inside and outside the Development Partnership. Promoting equal participation in decision-making, and in implementing actions.
- Innovation. Contribution of project to the usual practices and resources of the general policies in the field of training and employment of new solutions or different solutions to the already existing national or scope (activities, methodology, target groups ...)
- Ability to transfer. The actions that develop the projects must be by its nature, potentially transferable to other contexts or general policies.
- Transnational cooperation. Joint efforts among member countries for the joint search for solutions that can rely on the experience of others, increasing one's capacity for action.
- Integrated approach and focus. Integrated way of working solutions from a global

perspective.

However, rather than focus on the development of EQUAL, we would do in the way it has structured its development. This is configured as a network in which several public and private entities with a common aim, but do not necessarily share all the actions included in each project, if they reach critical levels of understanding and co- decision to ensure consistency in implementation.

Want to analyze, therefore, the mechanisms that have been articulated participatory processes to ensure both internal projects and their integration in the territories or sectors that have been implemented, following the principles of institutional collaboration and training, integrated approach and concentration and transnational cooperation. I want to analyze further how these systems have been maintained over time after completion of projects.

This networking model could represent an interesting avenue for promoting good governance in the design and implementation of public policies, since it is based on the interaction between a multitude of very diverse entities that pursue a common goal in the field of employment. The dynamics of work developed in this framework could serve as a basis for establishing alliances and interact according to the principles of good governance that makes the White Paper on European governance, openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence..( La Gobernanza Europea, un Libro Blanco 2001:10).

## 3. EQUAL IN ANDALUCÍA.

In Spain, during the period 2001-2004 160 projects were approved with a budget of 212.226 million euros. In Andalusia approved 29 projects totaling a budget of 48.4 million euros. Were created, therefore, 29 local partnerships (DPs) in which more than 250 institutions of various kinds. The number of participants of the groups ranged from 4 to 40 members, although the average is 16 participants per group. In turn, cooperation agreements were signed with 40 transnational partnerships in other European states, so it set a real network with embedded entities in the implementation of measures that seek to manage issues of a similar nature (unemployment, inequality in the labor market, training, etc).

By type of entity, which will have a greater presence in the development partnerships were

local public authorities and organizations and associations of local or regional character, which goes to show the importance given to these entities as partners recognized population and their concerns. Further emphasizes the high participation of business organizations in those partnerships that were geared towards reducing gender imbalances, showing concern about the inclusion of women on equal terms. The presence of these entities in partnerships responded to three basic functions: to represent the interests of the groups most at risk of exclusion, ensuring equal opportunities and to mediate between the groups and the target groups of interventions, both in recruitment processes person in the provision of services.

According to the evaluation report on the Employment of the Andalusian, the experience of EQUAL states that the operation of groups responding to a radio or network diagram "star" in which members of the partnership are linked to a central node of information flows (coordinating entity for each project), but maintain two-way communications between them and are characterized by their proactive in sharing information. Also, it is possible the collaboration between nodes without it necessarily coming to pass through the central node.

According Mataix (2007), we can distinguish three types of networks:
- Linear, who develop a relationship similar to traditional work with a central focus node communication.
- Institutional, where there are higher flows between nodes not pass through the center.
- Enablers, which are those with a greater degree of flexibility and connections between nodes, with a minor role for the central node, and are aimed at strengthening the capacities of its members through interaction.

In the case of projects in Andalusia, we find that institutional collaboration has been based on mixed networks, which combine elements of institutional networks and empowering.

Overall, the networks established under EQUAL have not come naturally but they responded to the obligation to establish groupings of entities to obtain funding under EQUAL, so it is especially important to assess whether this requirement is useful to encourage work in a stable network, beyond public funding.

## 4. REFLECTIONS ON THE VALIDITY OF THE EQUAL NETWORK IN ANDALUSIA. PROPOSAL ANALYSIS.

The point 12 of the European Council conclusions of 23 and 24 March 2006 clearly expresses the position of the Council of Europe regarding the role of regional and local authorities and civil society in the approach to employment policy "Member States have made real efforts to involve national parliaments and representatives of regional and local authorities and social partners and other stakeholders of civil society in the formulation of their NRPs. The European Council also welcomes the initiatives taken by the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee to increase the ownership on Community level and therefore encourages the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to continue their work and asks to be summary reports in support of the Partnership for Growth and Jobs in early 2008 "..(Dictamen de la Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CRPM) (2006:3).

On the other hand, the professor Subirats (2005:35-36) argues that "if we accept that the work sharing, networking, today is determining the policies of inclusion, we must recognize that the pursuit of strategies to take account value generated by the construction of the network and evaluating its effectiveness, learning ability and strength to set the future are increasingly significant elements in the whole dynamic assessment of current social policies. "

The Ministry of Employment of the Government of Andalusia, in the evaluation report of EQUAL, makes the following recommendation: "To analyze the inner workings of the partnerships, to approach the understanding of the principles of networking and the dynamics of these coalitions community, thus advancing the construction and measurement of social capital that ultimately generates. " Therefore, the government itself is aware of the importance of assessing not only the activities of the projects, but also the system of work developed within the clusters. It is imperative therefore to design new systems of assessment with specific indicators to assess the development of partnerships.

Clearly, therefore, the relevance of EQUAL not only the object of their interventions, but also the methodologies that have been used since the DPs in the project implementation. Thus the cooperation developed EQUAL has brought significant benefits in implementing the projects, the collective analysis

of issues on which to intervene and to design strategies to continue the promotion of complementarity between the partners involved, the optimization of resources used, the responsibility of different actors in the implementation of the actions, the co-decision on the implementation of budgets, and so on. We are interested in, so if these advantages could be exploited in the future.

But this interest goes beyond the assessment of the goodness of these systems work, and focuses on the sustainability over time of these systems or others who are defined as a result of the relationships promoted EQUAL.

Beyond the impact of projects on employment in the territories is essential to measure also the impact on the configuration of networks that provide a new approach to public policy. This sustainability should be considered as another element to consider in assessing the impact of EQUAL, assuming that the lack of continuity in institutional cooperation would be a significant reduction in efficiency.

In terms of collective learning and territorial intelligence, it is important to know the extent to which EQUAL has provided new methods of participation, through the configuration of the DPs, has improved the processes of intervention in the territory, both at knowledge and analysis of problems to solve, and the design of the interventions themselves.

As an approximation, and as is apparent from the analysis of partnerships undertaken by the Ministry of Employment of the Andalusian is clear that the staff who worked on the EQUAL projects had the perception that the methodologies of collaboration could be established maintained beyond the life of the projects (28% of staff respondents), including associations representing the target groups of actions taken that climbed to equality with the executing agencies of projects within the framework of the Development Partnerships. But in addition, 56.4% of technical staff believes that EQUAL has helped significantly the generation of new dynamic of cooperation for shared design strategies for promoting employment.

However, 30% of respondents did not believe that EQUAL has had a significant impact in strengthening development partnerships as platforms for sustainable local development and employment promotion, which raises the importance that can have its own configuration of

the entities of the DPs as limiting to promote collaborative processes in a stable manner.

But apart from relationships established within the DPs, it is important to analyze the processes of collaboration resulting from the cooperation you transnational projects. The durability of these processes, or at least cooperation in a broader sense, it is especially relevant given that such networks could catalyze the process of learning and transfer of knowledge between different areas and could thus represent a fundamental value in the field of public intervention.

The analysis raises is not just a generic way to know if they have maintained a collaborative process in time, but tries also to establish relationships between the longevity and the configuration of the DPs and their operating systems . So, in order to improve the durability of future networks, it is important to know how the actual design of the DPs in both types of partners such as systems working conditions the possibilities of remaining in the time.

In addition, the study should allow determining the factors that facilitate or hinder this permanence in time:

- No. of partners.
- Type of partners.
- Previous experience in cooperation systems.
- Participation in other networks.
- Presence of local actors.
- Presence of the target groups.
- Communication methodologies developed.
- Type of leading players.
- Paper developed by the government.

Undoubtedly, in this context EQUAL a test course that has gathered along information that may provide new insights into institutional cooperation, as well as the ability of the European Union to act as a catalyst for this process guarantees of success.

**Bibliography.**

Dictamen de la conference of peripheral maritime regions of Europe (CRPM) (2006). *Asamblea General de la CRPM - 26/27de octubre de 2006 en Murcia, España*. "La Dimensión Territorial de las Orientaciones Estratégicas Comunitarias: un modelo para 2007 y para después de 2013 ".Ref.: CRPMPPP060033 C0 – 26 de octubre de 2006. URL: www.crpm.org/pub/docs/121_ppp-osc-malte-esp.pdf

Juarez, G. L. and Sanchez, A. (2003), "Transformaciones en el estado de bienestar". *Análisis Económico, segundo cuatrimestre, año/volumen XVIII. Número 038.* URL: http://www.analisiseconomico.com.mx/pdf/3813.pdf. Consultado el día 28/05/11.

Just, J., Martinez, O., Estanyol, V., Mora, A. (2000), "El Partenariado como estrategia de trabajo social comunitario". *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*. ISSN: 0214-0314. URL: http://revistas.ucm.es/trs/02140314/articulos/CUTS0000110253A.PDF. Consultado el día 28/05/11.

Klijn, E. H. and Teisman, G. (2003): "Institutional and strategic barriers to public-private partnership: An analysis of Dutch cases". *Public Money & Management*, Julio de 2003, p. 137-146. Ley 30/2007, de 30 de octubre, de Contratos del Sector Público. En TAMYKO, Y (2009): "La gestión de partenariados público-privados: tipologías y retos de futuro". Instituto de Gobernanza y Dirección Pública (IGDP), URL-ESADE. *La colaboración público-privada y la creación de valor público.* Diputación de Barcelona. ISBN: 978-84-9803-353-3. Depósito legal: BI-3208-09

La gobernanza europea. Un libro blanco. Comisión Europea (2001). Bruselas, 25-07-2001; COM (2001) 428 final. Observatorio de la sostenibilidad en España (OSE). URL: http://www.sostenibilidad-es.org/es/plataformas-de-comunicacion/sostenibilidad-urbana-y-territorial/ciudad-y-metabolismo-urbano/participacion-y-gobierno/gobernabilidad. Consultada el día 15 de Julio/2011.

Libro blanco del crecimiento, la competitividad y el empleo. URL: http://www.gipuzkoa.net/esparru/cast/tyacim01.html. Consultada el día 18 de Julio/2011.

Miedes Ugarte, B. and Redondo Toronjo, D. (), "Nueva Economía Social y Lucha contra las Exclusiones: Elementos para el Debate". URL: http://www.ucm.es/info/ec/jec10/ponencias/1104MiedesyRedondo.pdf. Consultado el día 28/05/11.

Redes de cooperación institucional. Evaluación de la experiencia Equal en Andalucía. Servicio de

Iniciativas y Programas Comunitarios del Servicio Andaluz de Empleo. Sevilla. 2007.

Tamayo Saez, M. (1997), "El análisis de las políticas públicas". *Editorial Alianza Universidad* Texto Madrid. 1997.

Tamyko, Y. (2004), "Riesgos y beneficios de trabajar en partenariado en los gobiernos locales". *IX Congreso Internacional del CLAD sobre la Reforma del Estado y de la Administración Pública*, Madrid, España, Nov. 2004

Subirats, J. (2005): "Catorce puntos esenciales sobre evaluación de políticas públicas con especial referencia al caso de las políticas sociales", Revista Ekonomíaz, Nº 60, Vol. 1, 3er Cuatrimestre, 2005, pág. 36.