

**The ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives  
Innovations n°7**

**EMPLOYMENT AND SOLIDARITY**

Integrating vulnerable groups into economic activity

## FOREWORD

This seventh Innovation publication presents the results of efforts undertaken in partnership between the Commission and the Member States as well as between project promoters and participants in the field of combating social exclusion. The experience and knowledge gained through the INTEGRA projects have contributed to this report which supports our common goal of creating a more inclusive society.

Under the new provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty, the Commission and Member States are already working closely together to create more jobs and combat unemployment. In particular, Member States are well aware of the dangerous tensions that arise from the dynamics of exclusion and in the National Action Plans drawn up to implement the Employment Guidelines, they have committed themselves to preventing both youth and long-term unemployment. The Commission has proposed that the Employment Guidelines 1999 be broadened to cover groups and individuals experiencing particular difficulties in acquiring skills and accessing the labour market.

EMPLOYMENT-INTEGRA already supports innovative action to promote a labour market open to all, especially ethnic minorities, migrants and other similarly vulnerable groups. This activity should help to halt the spread of social and economic exclusion and help towards achieving a more cohesive society. This explains why the creation of a cohesive and inclusive society is also a major priority in the Social Action Programme (1998-2000) and why social inclusion will remain a high level priority for the Structural Funds beyond 2000.

EMPLOYMENT-INTEGRA is the main funding instrument of the European Union in favour of the most vulnerable groups in society in order to improve employability and promote social inclusion. Over 1,550 project promoters at local level, co-operating in 400 transnational partnerships, have taken this opportunity to combat exclusion by integrating excluded people into training and work. EMPLOYMENT-INTEGRA is pioneering new approaches in order to replace and renew old structures and attitudes with a view to improving the functioning of labour markets.

With a depth of understanding of problems and opportunities which only the local level can bring to bear, the INTEGRA projects and partnerships demonstrate a high degree of commitment at all levels of decision-making and delivery of services. Most important of all, INTEGRA shows that job seekers in severe difficulty can play an active and independent role in their own integration.

Pádraig Flynn

# CONTENTS

## **Background**

### **Adapted pathways to employment**

Key features of adapted pathways

Initial Contact, support and motivation

Empowerment

Skills Development

Positive Work Experience and follow-up

### **Entry into the world of enterprise**

Exploiting new sectors of activity and creating new work

Business creation in a solidarity-based economy

Creating your own job: self-employment

### **Selected model approaches**

Integrated approaches for quality services

Neighbourhood-based approaches

Intercultural approach and anti-racism

Private sector approaches

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

### **INTEGRA in brief**

## **BACKGROUND**

INTEGRA is part of the European Commission's EMPLOYMENT Community Initiative launched in 1994 for a period of five years. The EMPLOYMENT Community Initiative targets groups facing special difficulties in the labour market and will operate until the end of 1999. It has four inter-related strands: NOW for women, HORIZON for people with disabilities, INTEGRA for socially excluded people and YOUTHSTART for disadvantaged young people.

### **INTEGRA main priorities**

Integrated approaches  
Urban disadvantaged areas  
Anti-racism  
Empowerment

INTEGRA aims to promote access to work and employability for the most vulnerable groups. As such, it is the only significant European initiative to focus on tackling the discrimination, deprivation and educational deficits suffered by those at risk of exclusion from the labour market. About 500 projects running in 1995-1997 have been joined by a further 1,050 for the period 1998-1999. They are designed to experiment with innovative strategies and instruments and to enrich this work through transnational co-operation at project level. From their results, programme and policy innovators can draw information on more effective ways of integrating the most vulnerable groups into employment. Eligible groups include long-term unemployed people, lone parents without work, homeless people, migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, itinerants and travellers, offenders and ex-offenders and recovering substance abusers. Together they represent over half the unemployed in Europe.

### **This report**

This report aims to provide programme designers with an overview of innovative strategies and methods developed through INTEGRA projects. These demonstrate the benefits of establishing new forms of partnerships between institutions and agencies that are committed agents of integration. Two major dynamics for change are explored in the next two sections: the adapted pathway approach and strategies for facilitating entry into the world of enterprise. A third section highlights other model approaches.

Adapted pathways for vulnerable groups were the focus of a Transnational Working Group, led by Sweden, which met with exemplary projects in the spring of 1997. An INTEGRA conference was held in Barcelona in October 1997, organised by the Spanish Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs and the European Commission. Projects contributed actively to an exploration of a further range of priority issues and the outcomes of the Conference and the Working Group are reflected in this report.

### **Challenges in promoting access to work for vulnerable groups**

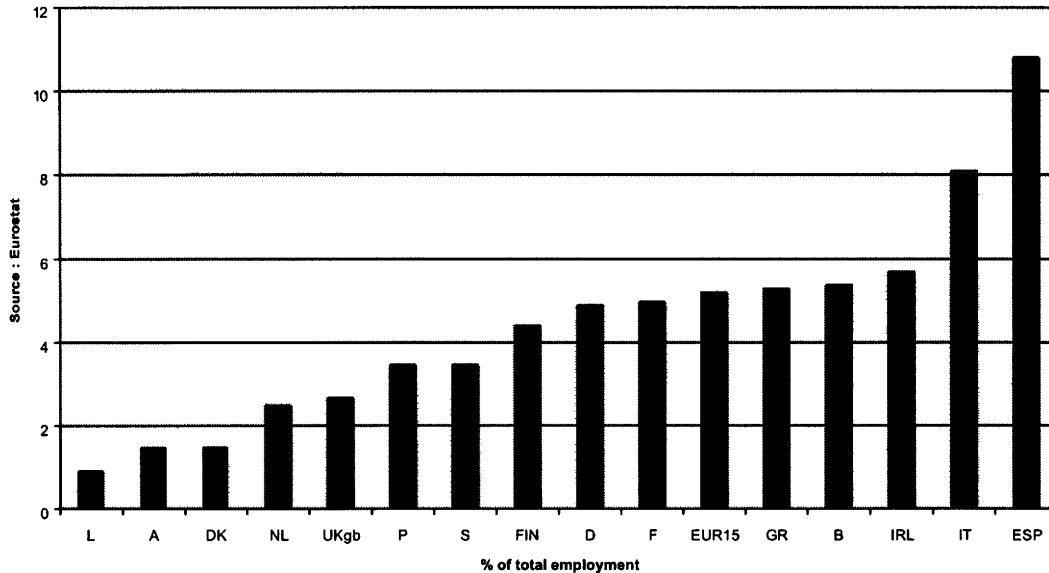
All EU Member States express concern about the dangerous tensions that result from the spread of social exclusion.

One person in six lives below the poverty line at any one time. This represented 57 million individuals living in poor households in 1993. However, individuals and families move in and out of poverty, for multiple reasons. Getting or losing a job is an important factor. At the same time, moving house, illness, bereavement, divorce, becoming responsible for additional children or dependent relatives are equally significant factors.

In particular regions and neighbourhoods, exclusion is exacerbated by the persistence of very high rates of long-term unemployment. A concentration of problems is found in deprived urban neighbourhoods where the rise of racism and xenophobia is particularly tangible. Despite the improvements registered recently in several Member States, long-term unemployment still affects over 8 million people in the EU.

Other new trends in society affect the employability of vulnerable groups as much as changes in the labour market.

Long-term unemployment rate in 1997



#### *New family histories*

The experience of unemployment is part of many family histories. One adult in six in the European Union has experienced unemployment in the last five years. Some young people are in the third generation experiencing long spells of unemployment. Family disputes, divorce, serious illness and migration can all increase chances of unemployment and poverty and long periods of dependency on benefits reduce chances of changing occupation. For example, single parent families, (between 5% and 18% of families in the Member States), homeless people, those caring for a dependent elderly or disabled person are exposed to exclusion from the labour market.

#### *Criminality and drug dependence threaten cohesiveness*

A growing prison population poses a renewed challenge to reduce re-offending rates. Rising rates of drug dependency also mobilise families and professionals around a search for prevention and rehabilitation strategies. Job integration is recognised as an effective way of preventing a relapse and a means of re-integrating those that succeed in escaping from substance abuse.

#### *Many local communities still suffer from the collapse of traditional employment.*

Whilst some of the oldest industrial areas are generating a new economic and social dynamic, others -for example in east Germany and Northern Spain- are still experiencing the shock waves of mass redundancies and depopulation. Some rural areas and urban disadvantaged areas constitute pockets of high unemployment and social exclusion.

#### *Welfare systems are undergoing major reform.*

Highly developed social welfare, training and employment services can present a complex and permanently changing maze, in which individuals need guidance to find their way. In many areas, the retreat of the welfare state has given rise to unfulfilled needs for neighbourhood and social support services.

#### *Racism and xenophobia are gaining ground*

A European Union-wide survey in 1997 showed worrying levels of racism and xenophobia, with nearly a third of those interviewed describing themselves as quite racist or very racist. Discriminatory practices can also be observed in training environments, recruitment procedures and in the work place.

### Exclusion from the labour market and the Structural Funds

Since 1993, one of the main priorities of the European Social Fund has been the integration into training and employment of those at risk of exclusion in the labour market. This has resulted in the expansion of provision for these target groups. The proposed new Structural Funds regulations again identify combating exclusion as one of five main priorities for human resource development over the next planning period (2000-2006).

The Structural Funds' actions for human resource development are to be shaped by the Guidelines set out in the European Employment Strategy agreed at the Luxembourg European Council, in December 1997. Under the broad objectives of economic and social cohesion, a number of priority objectives have implications for access to employment by vulnerable groups, for reducing the duration of unemployment and for combating racism. Member States have also committed themselves to providing annual National Employment Action Plans outlining policy proposals for the implementation of nineteen agreed Guidelines.

The four pillars of the Employment Strategy	Guidelines more directly relevant to INTEGRA target groups
(1) to improve employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to provide a new start for adult unemployed;</li> <li>to expand active measures;</li> <li>to involve social partners in developing employability.</li> </ul>
(2) to develop a spirit of enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to develop measures to help small and medium-size enterprises;</li> <li>to encourage self-employment;</li> <li>to exploit opportunity for job creation at local level, including via the social economy.</li> </ul>
(3) to encourage the adaptability of firms and workers	
(4) to reinforce equal opportunity policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to raise levels of access to care services.</li> </ul>

For the period 2000-2006, a new Community Initiative will promote further innovation in promoting equal opportunities for all in the labour market. It will be a test-bed for new ideas continuing what the various strands of EMPLOYMENT have done to date.

### INTEGRA in the member states

Two main lines of action can be discerned in Member States' strategic priorities to tackle long-term unemployment and exclusion from the labour market:

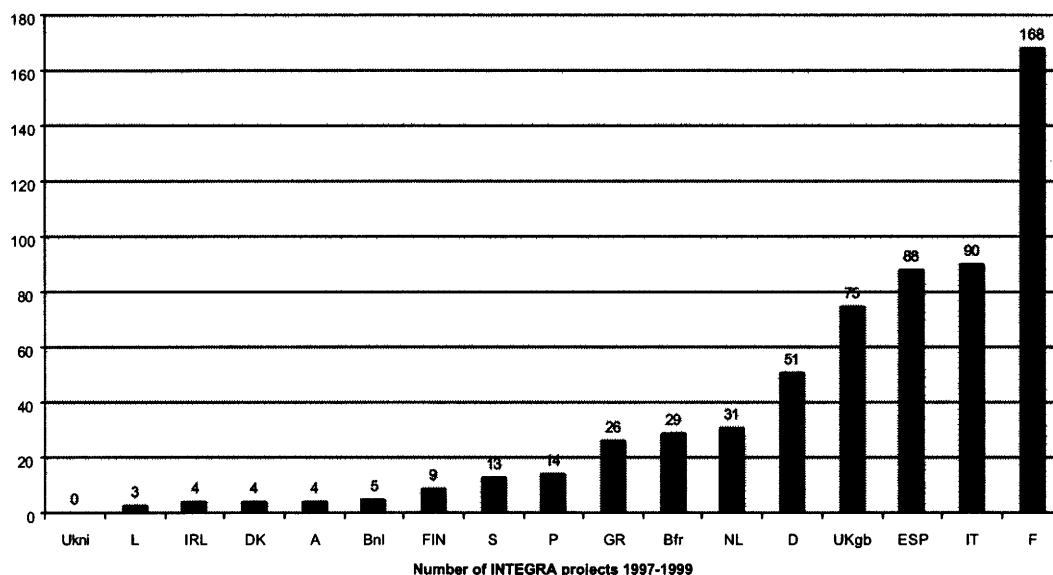
- early action to prevent the unemployed drifting into long-term unemployment*  
In Belgium, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK, this involves recruitment aids to employers, exemptions from social security contributions or other forms of temporary subsidy. In the UK and Ireland, incentives to job-seekers may take the form of an income supplement. Elsewhere, active measures, such as offers of training, make payment of unemployment benefit conditional on acceptance (Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Germany).

- *special tailor-made initiatives*

These are developed in all Member States and emphasise individual support, advice, guidance and counselling, and the development of integration pathways. They intensify links between employment services and employers, support the development of partnerships at local level, and may foster business creation by excluded groups.

INTEGRA supports a wide range of measures in relation to guidance and training, job creation, awareness-raising and structural change. Member States have largely supported partnership projects which combine the application of several types of measures to establish structured pathways and job creation initiatives. A number of Member States have also opted to give particularly strong priority to projects benefiting migrant groups (Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden). In line with the new focus provided by the July 1996 guidelines for INTEGRA, projects starting in 1998 demonstrate a greater emphasis on anti-racism and empowerment.

**Integration of migrants and minorities into employment and anti-racism**



### Complementing European social policy

The ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty will strengthen the drive towards defining common social objectives consistent with European economic and employment policies. INTEGRA provides opportunities to assist progress towards a Citizens' Europe. Its grassroots projects can illustrate new ways of tackling issues under debate in the fields of social protection, anti-racism and the generalisation of policies for social inclusion.

- INTEGRA projects negotiate adaptations to social benefit systems which develop incentives to work for people previously, or intermittently, dependent on benefits. To make social protection more employment-friendly and to move towards guaranteeing minimum resources for all are some of the common objectives set by the Member States for the reform of social protection (Ref: Commission Communication on *"The future of social protection: framework for a European debate"*, COM(95)466 - October 1995);
- INTEGRA transnational partnerships accelerate the transfer of experience and know-how in reducing discrimination in training and employment. Some demonstrate how to tackle simultaneously some of the complex causes of the persistence of racism: poor education, unemployment, poverty, exclusion, degradation of the urban environment and insecurity. (Ref: Commission Communication on *"An action plan against racism"*, COM (98)183 - March 1998);
- INTEGRA projects develop effective methods of promoting social integration which have implications for making social inclusion a priority in every public policy domain, including developing social

entrepreneurship, the social economy, citizenship and participation. (Article 136 of the Treaty will provide a legal basis for further collaboration with the Member States to promote social inclusion).

### ***ADAPTED PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT***

Adult job seekers encountering a range of difficulties in returning to work respond best to opportunities closely tailored to their needs and aspirations and adapted to realistic work prospects. Given the multitude of factors that have so far prevented their reintegration, a comprehensive strategy is required to assist them along a pathway towards greater employability. Many INTEGRA projects have developed adaptations to the structured pathway approach. The most successful of these tend to be most closely targeted on a particular group, on a disadvantaged area, or on job prospects in a particular sector.

Adapted pathways are characterised by the fact that they take account of the life experience of each of the groups concerned, as workers, but also as citizens and holders of family responsibilities. From this experience, many people can derive a strong capacity for initiative which they can be empowered to use. A realistic assessment of local job opportunities often implies a period of work experience in the public or voluntary sector, or in part-subsidised enterprises. For some, self-employment is an attractive alternative.

### **KEY FEATURES OF ADAPTED PATHWAYS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS**

INTEGRA projects adapt the features of these structured pathways to particular target groups and local labour markets. They include a series of stages, which are given different emphases depending on needs and opportunities. Job seekers receive guidance through a structured menu of opportunities for information, guidance and counselling, pre-training, vocational training, assistance in career planning and job search, work placements and help with activity or enterprise creation. The providers offer a flexible approach in which participants are empowered to assess and orient their own progress and draw strength from each other. Public services, employers and organisations are encouraged to make a contribution in a structured partnership process.

The effectiveness of adapted pathways depends on being able to maintain quality standards whilst offering maximum flexibility to foster responsibility, commitment and progress towards social, cultural and job integration. They are as diverse as the circumstances of the target groups and local labour markets. Yet, a number of key features can be identified.



**Key features of adapted pathways to employment for vulnerable groups**

<b>Which are the key elements ?</b>	<b>How to foster a partnership process ?</b>
<p><b>INITIAL CONTACT, SUPPORT AND MOTIVATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to potential participants through local associations and agencies;</li> <li>• Provide assistance with child care, housing, money management, health...as required;</li> <li>• Facilitate a more stable home and family environment.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPOWERMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to participant's needs and aspirations and try to understand cultural values;</li> <li>• Legitimise prior knowledge and skills;</li> <li>• Provide information on local labour market and services;</li> <li>• Develop career planning skills;</li> <li>• Provide information on citizen's rights and responsibilities;</li> <li>• Encourage commitment as an active citizen;</li> <li>• Explore cultural difference;</li> <li>• Generate capacities and opportunities to participate in decision-making at project-level and in the local community.</li> </ul> <p><b>INTERCULTURAL WORK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce cross-cultural awareness in all project activities;</li> <li>• Favour mixed groups of participants in terms of gender, age and ethnicity;</li> <li>• Train participants and staff in intercultural communication;</li> <li>• Make intercultural communication a dimension of each learning experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>SKILLS DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer pre-training in basic communication skills (language, literacy, numeracy, interaction, teamwork);</li> <li>• Design training suited to adult learners.</li> </ul> <p><b>WORK EXPERIENCE AND FOLLOW-UP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build in regular self-assessment of progress;</li> <li>• Familiarise with local work culture;</li> <li>• Establish support for supervisors or mentors;</li> <li>• Evaluate and record learning outcomes;</li> <li>• Formalise the record of achievement;</li> <li>• Use or develop systems of certification;</li> <li>• Support personal career planning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DRAW A WIDE NET</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review potential partner organisations and identify the mutual benefit of their participation;</li> <li>• Maintain formal or informal contact with sources of expertise or influence.</li> </ul> <p><b>CLEAR ASSUMPTIONS, GOALS AND STRATEGIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid misunderstandings about expected outcomes;</li> <li>• Ensure consistency and continuity of approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>WORKPLACES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist adaptation of recruitment practice in specific sectors;</li> <li>• Negotiate the conditions and expected outcomes of work placements;</li> <li>• Offer guidance or training to supervisors/mentors, personnel officers and trade union representatives, for example in intercultural relations.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYERS and EMPLOYER ORGANISATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish practical co-operation;</li> <li>• Involve employers in the training process (introductions to enterprise culture);</li> <li>• Provide direct support during placements;</li> <li>• Encourage the subsequent employment of trainees.</li> </ul> <p><b>PROFESSIONALS IN PUBLIC SERVICES AND NGOs(e.g. trainers, advisers, social workers, etc.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform about target group needs and capacities;</li> <li>• Develop multi-disciplinary approaches;</li> <li>• Provide intercultural training.</li> </ul> <p><b>COOPERATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make time to explore differences in professional roles and ethics;</li> <li>• Focus on changing priorities and practice in participating organisations.</li> </ul> <p><b>PUBLIC AWARENESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispel prejudices;</li> <li>• Create opportunities to publicise project's strategy and achievements.</li> </ul>

## INITIAL CONTACT, SUPPORT AND MOTIVATION

For marginalised people, the prospect of employment is not always the first motivation to become involved in education and training. Isolation, lack of self-confidence, poor communication skills all need to be overcome. Information on available opportunities may fail to reach the people concerned. Most training programmes give preference to candidates with better communication skills who are likely to achieve rapid and measurable progress.

First contact with new opportunities can be through neighbourhood groups and associations, leisure services, school-related activities, local citizen information bureaux, or even a home visit or a street encounter.

***Moving On - Opportunities for Young Mothers*** is a training project for isolated young mothers aged between 18 and 25 years. It operates in eight localities in Northern Ireland. Most young isolated mothers in the area fail to participate in training and employment. They are unable to follow a course of study because of their role and responsibilities as mothers. Recognising that young mothers often find themselves excluded by services unsuited to their needs, the project developed a tailor-made approach. Initial contact is made through a visit to the home and to local groups. The aim is to improve the young mothers' skills, self-confidence and employability. The method is multi-dimensional and offers participants a series of training modules that enable them to acquire skills in communication, health, parenting, job search, child development and teamwork. The development of the participants' motivation is a key element in the project's strategy which includes: tutoring, peer group support, a flexible time-table, provision of crèche facilities and the taking into account of participants' prior learning and experience.

All of the hundred young mothers have obtained qualifications corresponding to the training modules and recognised by the Open College Network in Northern Ireland and 80% have progressed to employment or vocational training. Participants have realised the importance of the training they have undertaken and at the same time this has increased their self-esteem. This success also inspired the Dutch transnational partners to explore new certification systems.

## EMPOWERMENT

Socially excluded people and those excluded from the labour market are disempowered. The empowerment process involves the development of both the capacity and opportunity to play a full role in society and in economic activity. To become more empowered as individuals, as citizens and as workers, project participants must build up their confidence, acquire new knowledge and skills and exercise choice. At the same time, new forms of recognition, new opportunities and appropriate infrastructures need to become accessible.

An empowerment process can be an integral part of an adapted pathway. It relies on project workers' ability to listen to the participants needs and aspirations and to understand their cultural values. On that basis, a project is able to determine how to legitimise prior experience and skills, provide essential information to cope better with day to day life and promote understanding of other cultures. Many projects offer opportunities to learn about the realities of the local labour market and to come to grips with the local culture and social systems. Participants can catch up with basic skills and acquire a number of key transversal skills like communication and the ability to be part of a team. Mutual help and support accelerate progress in this respect.

*The road to empowerment can be long. In the Goutte d'Or district of Paris, thirty women originally from North or West Africa have entered a process of social and economic integration thanks to the project **Insertion et Adaptation à la Société française**. Most of them had no schooling and remain illiterate after five or ten years in France. Being more able to support their children's educational progress, deal with officialdom, use the telephone or travel alone can be strong motivational factors alongside a desire to improve the family budget and facilitate their children's integration. During two and a half years, they follow a part-time curriculum in which they learn to deal with encounters in everyday life (school, doctor, health services, electricity board, neighbourhood events..), learn to read and count and receive an introduction to their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Individual counselling accompanies this programme. Most of them decide to combine family responsibilities and vocational training, with continued support, over another five years or more. The association leading the project has established strong partnership links with a range of integration bodies with whom they negotiate the steps of this extended pathway to employment.*

*Many people starting a prison sentence are under 30 and will only remain in prison for a few months. Those who obtain suitable employment after release are three times less likely to re-offend. With this in mind, the Hoppenbank e.V. association in Bremen has established a placement bureau. In the INTEGRA project **Soziale und berufliche Eingliederung von Häftlingen und Strafenentlassenen** (Social and professional integration of prisoners and ex-offenders), contacts with transnational partners have motivated them to establish adapted pathways during and after the short prison sentence. Prison authorities and social services co-operate with the project in providing a structured step-by-step, client-centred programme of assessment, mentoring, short training modules and elements of vocational training and work placements before release. A major factor in success is that the assistance is provided immediately on entry into prison and support is continued beyond release, in work placements and sheltered employment.*

Empowerment requires adequate opportunities to use newly acquired motivation and skills. Adapted pathways can support collective "capacity-building", i.e. the direct involvement of the people concerned in developing and managing new local services, organisations and infrastructure. Participation in improving the quality of local life forms a strong common bond which helps overcome isolation and contributes to managing conflict. INTEGRA supports partnership projects that empower the people concerned to participate in the taking of decisions that affect them. This provides added-value for the employability of the individuals involved and, at the same time, has a snowball effect on creating an environment favourable to social and economic integration. Actions undertaken by projects include:

- training for organisers and managers of local community associations, services or facilities;
- training for an advocacy or representative role in local consultative and executive committees;
- training to be agents of change for the neighbourhood or community;
- training to be "mediators" between cultural groups and relevant employers and services;
- training for work or self-employment in household and neighbourhood services sectors.

***TRANSCAP**, in the region of Wolverhampton in England, offers an integration pathway to unemployed residents who previously worked as volunteers with local associations in their disadvantaged neighbourhood. As committed active citizens, the training programme enables them to become more professional and obtain a qualification as community workers. The trainees have obtained remunerated posts in local NGOs or semi-public agencies (housing association, child care centre..) or responsible positions in local associations. The project also developed a training curriculum for the trainers on the course. Trainees have indicated that gaining organisational skills to serve the community was as strong a motivation as the prospect of remunerated work.*

*An INTEGRA transnational partnership **DYNAMISACION**, brings together eight organisations of gypsies and travellers. Projects in Portugal, Spain, France, Ireland and Greece are training "mediators" to act as brokers between members of the gypsy or traveller community and public and private agencies. As a member of that community, the mediator has an insight into the conflicts and frustration experienced as many of their traditional trades and way of life are threatened. The mediator identifies problems and, depending on local circumstances, becomes a family adviser, health worker, social worker, trainer, legal adviser, community development worker or enterprise development adviser as required. Patience, listening ability and conflict management skills are essential, as well as the capacity to empower people to take new initiatives. For example, the wish to run viable businesses can be strong. In Alsace, mediators have become advisers on the creation of micro-enterprises. In Madrid, the training programme is an apprenticeship for community mediators.*

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Skills development is a core element of all adapted pathways. It can include opportunities for basic skills training, vocational training and training to work in a multi-cultural context. Some projects are entirely devoted to the training of trainers, workplace supervisors and other front-line professionals. Adult learning requires teaching techniques that capitalise on the previous experience of trainees, overcome attention-span difficulties and take account of family responsibilities, limited income or mobility and cultural background. INTEGRA projects are involved in:

- developing initial skills assessment tools adapted to the target group;
- providing practical support to participation in standard vocational training;
- developing adapted college courses;
- formalising a new curriculum for adoption by other training bodies;
- obtaining recognition of qualification on completion of a tailor-made course of learning;
- developing job-search skills;
- providing courses for personnel officers, trade union representatives, trainers, social workers, doctors, employment counsellors to develop intercultural communication skills.

**Integration into the host culture** is a priority in skills development for migrants, minorities, refugees and people from other cultures. Average unemployment rates amongst third country nationals in the European Union are twice as high as local rates of unemployment. Integration pathways for people of other cultures include steps towards a better mutual understanding of cultural differences and the rebuilding of self-esteem after trauma or major change. They include language and communication classes and introduction to every day life in the host country. They create opportunities to raise the cultural awareness of local people and professionals. These pathways are alternatives to national integration programmes that tend to concentrate on formal language and citizenship education programmes. These are often ill-suited to the most vulnerable groups and do little to tackle direct and indirect discrimination in employment.

*The Danish project **Europa Fortæller** (Europe tells a story) uses the development of artistic skills to explore cultural difference and introduce skills development. The project brings together Danish and migrant people in a disadvantaged area, around activities of tapestry making and puppet theatre. Alongside Danish language classes, participants are encouraged to tell the story of their journey and share legends, stories and traditions from their own culture in a process of artistic creation. Technical skills are enhanced and opportunities are created to present the finished products at local community and transnational events. Local colleges and employment services participate in the project. Colleges are adapting the standard curriculum offered to new immigrants to Denmark to include pedagogical models developed by the project and employment services have supported the establishment of a local business house for immigrant people, funded through ERDF Article 10. Transnational co-operation produced many publications including a book of illustrated life-stories and a trainer's guide recording innovative methods in second language teaching.*

**Highly-educated refugees and immigrants** also encounter difficulties in finding work as they need opportunities to understand the local systems and work culture and develop skills to suit. Access to standard courses is often impossible due to remaining difficulties with language, lack of access to income support or care responsibilities. INTEGRA projects can offer fast track re-skilling accompanied by the type of information and support needed for successful integration into employment or self-employment. A Finnish project **Cultural Bridges** developed a course in business management for immigrant and refugee women

which has been closely monitored by a regional panel and is gaining national recognition. A Dutch project **Perspectives for Migrants** has created a new "employability" curriculum for immigrants and refugees. The stress is on career-planning skills and the acquisition of a personal network of professional contacts. This project has also gained the trust of local employers via supported work placements and several of them have asked the project to provide cultural awareness training for their personnel officers.

**Cultural Bridges**, a Finnish project led by the University of Vaasa provides business skills training for immigrant and refugee women. The course includes an adapted assessment and guidance system, timetables suited to family responsibilities, a re-inforcement of communication skills and negotiated work placements. A Resource Circle has followed progress at each stage. Representatives of the state and region, employment office, district labour office, provincial government, social workers and immigrants themselves have met twice a month with a view to promoting immigrant education at regional level. Its monitoring activities have triggered the creation of a national network on immigrant education and employment issues, which brings together a number of similar regional groups. The course model is a key contribution to planning further resource development at national level.

**Jungletrommen** in Copenhagen offers a qualifying training as a Multicultural Communication Assistant to highly qualified migrants (journalists, engineers etc.). After a year of training, the participants are assisted in finding a placement with an employer in the private, public or voluntary sector. Since the first group of trainees had failed to obtain placement or subsequent employment in the private sector, the training offer was adjusted to include input from trainers from private enterprise. A new training module prepares participants for professional life, the codes of behaviour and the use of new technology in modern Danish enterprises. Encouraged by the high level of performance among the trainees, the project set itself the objective of persuading firms offering work placements to offer an employment contract before the end of the placement period. In this way, a number of publicly subsidised places were turned into ordinary employment contracts within six months.

**New information and communication technology** is rarely accessible to vulnerable groups. Many projects include a basic introduction to computers as part of the offer of basic skill development and new technology is also used as a training tool. As part of the **TIME (Transnational Innovation in Multimedia Employment)** transnational partnership, a project based at Nantes University has developed multi-media tools to deliver a learning course for the long-term unemployed.

**Training of trainers and other front-line professionals** improves their effectiveness in integrating vulnerable groups. With a more specialist understanding of constraints and opportunities faced by ex-prisoners, ex-substance abusers, immigrants and refugees and other disadvantaged groups, professionals become more able to empower them to take responsibility for their own future.

**Odissea**, promoted by Caritas Italiana trains both refugees and Italian unemployed people to become trainers in intercultural communication. The trainers will become multipliers in a process of raising the skills of social workers and other professionals in facilitating the integration of refugees. Course contents were planned with the help of a range of immigrant associations. They are fully documented and include learning from visits to partner projects also involved in intercultural training. These new professional trainers in intercultural communication are forming an international network to continue to promote their work.

## POSITIVE WORK EXPERIENCE AND FOLLOW-UP

As part of the adapted pathway approach, projects either provide on-the-job training or negotiate work placements to complement a course of study. Reluctance on the part of employers to offer placements to vulnerable groups can be overcome by building trust in the skills and reliability of the trainees, facilitating access to financial incentives where they exist, and offering support to the supervisors. A successful placement is one that:

- is part of an adapted pathway for employment;
- leads to subsequent employment;
- is related to previous study;
- offers job-relevant learning opportunities;
- offers experience of jobs which are in demand in the local community;
- supports the supervisor in his/her tutoring role;
- establishes a pattern of trainee support which improves their integration as new employees;
- enhances the employer's image as socially responsible.

**Intermediate labour markets** have been a major source of work placements. These initiatives take advantage of employment subsidies to undertake activities that are additional to normal public provision and would not, by definition, be provided by the market. Although considered part of the social economy, their legal status usually bars them from becoming profit-making firms. Member States are expanding support for such initiatives, which provide training experience and temporary employment for the most hard-to-place people. Over time, INTEGRA initiatives often aim to become profit-making and adopt a private sector ethos. This enhances participants' prospects of finding employment in the primary labour market. In some cases, the emphasis is on empowering trainees to tender for contracts and become self-employed.

***JANUS-Chantiers solidaires** is a project developed by a training organisation, ACSEA-Les Cèdres, in the département of Basse-Normandie, in collaboration with PACT-ARIM, a national building rehabilitation association servicing municipalities and developing "learning building sites" ("chantiers-écoles") for unemployed people. Traditional cottages have been renovated to house disadvantaged families. In the process, two types of people benefited from work experience: low skilled trainees following an integration pathway received training as roof-builders and joiners, whilst intermittently employed craftsmen, employed under CES status (Contrat-Emploi-Solidarité), followed an apprenticeship in the techniques of ancient wall-covering.*

*Work experience opportunities were provided thanks to a structured partnership with PACT-ARIM, the chamber of commerce and training bodies. PACT-ARIM acts as a building contractor, contracting local enterprises with which they negotiate a precise form of collaboration with training and support agencies. When agreeing to provide work placements to unemployed trainees, enterprises are aware that it might add about 10% to work completion time. The contracts mirror those of a national Charter between the Builders Association and the social housing federation (HLM). Each firm responds to a call for competitive tender containing additional conditions on the provision of placements and collaboration with integration agencies.*

*In this Normandy project, trainees' progress is monitored systematically and a Trainee "passport" is prepared, showing the learning achievements. In three years, the Trainee Passport has become recognised by training and employment agencies and by employers as a reliable indicator of employability. It facilitates the trainee's access to further training and employment. Two thirds of the initially low-skilled trainees gained employment contracts with an enterprise at the end of their placement.*

**Follow-up support** during the first employment contract is an effective way of preventing discouragement as new challenges are encountered in working life. With the growth of part-time and short-term contracts, new skills are required to manage budgets, time and family responsibilities.

*Risks of exclusion from the labour market also affect people recovering from substance abuse despite progress made in their personal and social rehabilitation. A national association in Greece runs KETHEA, a therapeutic centre for substance abusers. Its project "**Integrated social rehabilitation of substance abusers**", located in a disadvantaged area in the centre of Athens, has installed a one-*

*stop service which encourages various services to offer follow-up support to part-time employed substance abusers who are receiving methadone treatment. Family and personal counselling, psychological support, therapeutic services, training, work placement, and employment guidance are available on the spot. Participants are mainly under 30 years of age, in part-time employment but only able to sustain this life-style thanks to the individual and group support provided by the project.*

## **ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF ENTERPRISE**

Employment programmes have been expanding their support for the development of new jobs through business creation *by and for* long-term unemployed people, immigrants and other vulnerable groups. Firms created in this context range from micro-enterprises, to co-operatives and social enterprises which aim to become commercial while aiding unemployed people to train and obtain quality employment. They take advantage of new opportunities arising from the growth of sub-contracting and often operate in new or expanding sectors of activity.

Initiatives that foster a spirit of enterprise among vulnerable groups take into account the particular mix of strengths and weaknesses of potential entrepreneurs. For example, immigrant people can bring skills and know-how that help establish contacts abroad and develop exports. Unemployed people can have a strong motivation to create services that will improve the quality of life in their own community. At the same time, vulnerable groups encounter major obstacles such as lack of training in business management, lack of knowledge of markets and of the enterprise culture and difficulties in accessing start-up capital.

Many INTEGRA projects concentrate on developing or exploiting a dynamic of enterprise creation in areas of high unemployment. They provide tailor-made advice, training and support to potential entrepreneurs. Their approach is *market oriented*: it aims to match an emerging demand for new products and services at local level, with a labour supply energised by newly-acquired skills and initial support. At the same time, a large majority of projects combine this market approach with explicit *solidarity objectives*. Their socially-useful goals include: improving the quality of local life; a better physical environment; equality of opportunity; support for local development priorities; and, importantly, the provision of training and rewarding work to vulnerable groups.

INTEGRA projects make an important contribution to the development of an economy based on solidarity, a goal reaffirmed by the Amsterdam Council in December 1997 when Member States called for "an economy founded on principles of inclusion, solidarity, justice and a sustainable environment and capable of benefiting all citizens".

## **EXPLOITING NEW SECTORS OF ACTIVITY AND CREATING NEW WORK**

The European Union has drawn attention to the growing number of local economic initiatives in new sectors of activity. Business creation initiatives supported in INTEGRA also arise from local dynamics and specifically seek to create new work for vulnerable groups. They have identified sectors that present a considerable potential for retrained unemployed people. Among the 19 new sectors identified by the European Union as conducive to employment-intensive economic growth, INTEGRA projects concentrate particularly on the fields of environment (recycling, gardening), audio-visual and media, housing renovation as well as personal, household and neighbourhood services.

#### Steps in business creation for excluded groups in new economic sectors

- Identification of "saleable" skills and know-how;
- Profiling of potential entrepreneurs;
- Individual support and counselling to stabilise home life;
- Market research of the business idea(s) (public and/or private markets);
- Updating of technical skills;
- Training modules for business start-up adapted to the local situation and the abilities of the participants, and accompanied by training placements in enterprises;
- Establishment of virtual enterprises, as training tools;
- Direct creation of activity, by the project promoter, based on small contracts;
- Follow-up advice service for newly created businesses, particularly in the areas of financial management, legal advice, market studies, support for finding and replying to calls for tender;
- Preparation for managing an enterprise with the legal status of co-operative or other nationally-defined forms of social enterprises;
- Promotion of local actions to stimulate demand in the chosen sector (environmental policies, contacts with potential contractors,...);
- Negotiations with banks and major contracting firms;
- Development of new sources of funding for risk-capital for social enterprises, particularly through the use of local savings.

**Environmental services** offer good prospects in areas where new policy priorities call for an expansion of recycling activities. A single enterprise, dedicated to the provision of training and employment for excluded groups, can benefit from INTEGRA to progress towards a declared goal of attaining commercial viability.

*In Dublin's north Inner City, the **SUNFLOWER** project has founded a limited company for the collection and resale of waste material. This innovation arose from a feasibility study into sustainable employment, supported by the Dublin Inner City Partnership. For the first time, waste from several hundred households and over 60 businesses is being collected separately, sorted and resold, thus reducing the need for public waste disposal.*

*In an area with some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, the project offers its employees access to on-the-job training in waste management, machine operation and health and safety. This is complemented by a range of training courses including lorry driving, computer skills, gardening, art and business management. The on-going guidance has resulted in all trainees either getting a job or pursuing further training. Two thirds of the trainees have obtained a job-related qualification. The project also undertakes further feasibility studies to extend their trading in the recycling sector and other fields related to the environment. The prospects for business expansion are good.*

*The company's management board is a broad partnership between public employment and training bodies, economic development agencies and local voluntary organisations which contribute expertise and make direct input into the work of the project. Encouraged by the experience of Sunflower, Dublin City Corporation has developed a waste management strategy which will involve setting up other local recycling plants.*

*Transnational cooperation in **OSCAR** (Open Skills in Computer Recycling) focused on establishing a common model for the development of computer equipment recycling. The final evaluation has been the basis for the production of a CD-ROM.*

**Household and care services**, for which demand is growing in the private sector, represent an attractive opportunity for disadvantaged people. For example, in a large disadvantaged urban district of Grenoble, France, the project "**Développement de l'emploi et de la formation pour les services de proximité**" carried out a feasibility study into the pattern of demand for neighbourhood services. It organises relevant employment training and acts as a *specialised placement service*, establishing a liaison between job-seekers, other social and employment services and potential employers.

**Changing patterns of household consumption** can be more quickly identified and exploited by projects already located in a disadvantaged area. In a district of very high unemployment in a former industrial area of Genk in Belgium, the project "**New perspectives, new horizons**" promotes a new start for the retail



sector, which had almost disappeared. Here, a partnership approach has brought resources to bear on a renovation plan for a new shopping street, and has led to the establishment of a *business centre for the retail sector* and the opening of many new shops by retrained job-seekers mainly from the immigrant community. Synergy between economic development programmes, market research and training provision resulted in the business advice centre tailoring its services to the needs of local entrepreneurs previously unemployed.

**Access to start-up capital** is being promoted through transnational co-operation. The hurdles encountered by all business creators are multiplied when entrepreneurs have suffered disadvantage or discrimination over long periods of time. Improving access to start-up capital is a common objective of **HORIZON 2001**, a transnational partnerships of 8 projects based in Spain, Belgium and France. They have created an Interregional Development Fund, with the status of a Belgian co-operative society, which regroups three credit cooperatives able to tap into local saving capacity.

## BUSINESS CREATION IN A SOLIDARITY-BASED ECONOMY

A growing number of large European companies are broadening their commitment to a solidarity-based economy. Commissioner Flynn's message that "you cannot build competitive business in a social wasteland" is being heard. Commercial strategies increasingly include company-based initiatives to develop job-relevant skills, and the opening of access to contracts to third sector firms. To support this, a group of pioneering firms founded the European Business Network for Social Cohesion in 1995. They stimulate initiatives and advertise good practice, especially the development of partnerships to facilitate business creation and new forms of employment for vulnerable groups.

A solidarity-based economy is also one that takes steps to facilitate access to jobs and to a culture of entrepreneurship for those at risk of exclusion from the labour market. Thanks to the development of the "third sector", a certain consensus is emerging at European level around the notion of "social enterprise" which is characterised by a double objective of profit-making and benefiting the public good.

**Favourable company status** is a framework condition for many INTEGRA initiatives. Some Member States have developed empowering legislation, of which the following examples are indicative of a trend.

In Italy, one of the two types of social co-operatives can provide education, health and social services. Their members include workers, volunteers and users of the services and the participation of excluded groups is welcome. A growing number of companies lend them financial support. Some local authorities reserve a quota of public contracts to support their employment integration activities.

In France, "integration enterprises" (*entreprises d'insertion*) derive the greater part of their resources from sales in the open market. Job subsidies for up to two years (European Social Fund) and loans from local authorities are their other main source of revenue. They are partly exempt from employer's tax. They must demonstrate a sound economic base and are increasingly under pressure to work towards achieving profit. Many retain an association status, others have become normal companies or co-operatives.

In Belgium, the status of "company with social objectives" (*société à finalité sociale/sociaal invoeg bedrijf*) was created, in 1997, for firms that are "not dedicated to wealth creation for their members". "Companies for training through work" for disadvantaged people and "integration enterprises" for people with low qualifications have also existed for over 12 years, and benefit from a number of subsidies and tax exemptions.

Despite their favourable status, social enterprises face a greater challenge than normal companies due to a high turnover of supervisory staff, a proportion of low-productivity workers and difficulty in accessing medium-term risk capital to attain threshold growth levels.

INTEGRA has contributed to the emergence of a transnational agreement on the **ethical objectives** characteristic of the third sector. A product of the INTEGRA transnational partnership, **HORIZON 2001**, is a "Charter of Enterprises for a solidarity-based world" prepared by twelve projects and gradually being rewritten by others.

**The main principles of the Charter for a solidarity based economy**

- a balance between the respective interests of employers, workers, clients and the community;
- job security, decent working conditions and pay, and conditions which are conducive to future expansion;
- production methods which are environmentally friendly and which create jobs;
- co-operation rather than competition both inside and outside the enterprise.

## **INTEGRA projects are facilitators of business creation**

Business creation combined with solidarity objectives often appears in disadvantaged areas where a comprehensive approach to social and economic development is already in place. Organisations committed to multi-faceted action, over the long-term, are well placed to become promoters of business creation. They are able to motivate potential entrepreneurs to undertake appropriate preparation before launching a new business. As part of this process, INTEGRA projects help initiate new dynamics, expand into new sectors or attract complementary resources.

*The **TRINIOVE** Foundation has been working with young people and other marginalised groups for over ten years in Trinitat Vella, a disadvantaged district in the north of Barcelona. The area is isolated by a motorway and a highly polluted river. Immigrants of African origin are continuing to settle there and the average unemployment rate is over 30%.*

*Trinijove believes that the social integration of young people, women and the long term unemployed can only be effective if it is linked closely with economic and professional integration. Hence their integrated approach which includes information activities, training, employment, the organisation of free time and help with business start-up. Business creation or paid employment is the ultimate objective. The Foundation's territorial approach is strengthened through its partnership work with the region of Catalunya, the city of Barcelona, the parish of Saint Trinity and the Fondation Accio Solidaria contra l'Atur.*

*As part of its normal work, Trinijove runs a public information centre on the use of public services, opportunities for social activities, training and legal assistance. It also provides individually tailored vocational training together with basic training. This service is available to long term unemployed people, as well as to those who want to improve their position in the labour market. Individuals who have a low level of education get a second chance to train, or can learn Catalan or English. Trainees gain qualifications as gardeners, industrial machinists, family workers, auxiliary geriatric workers or as specialists in new technologies, such as computer assisted design and lay-outing. Young people between the ages of 16-18 can follow a technical apprenticeship which is accompanied by individual mentoring by both family members and the staff at the centre.*

*Through INTEGRA, people previously dependent on social security have gained access to paid employment in the intermediate labour market or, through mediation, to jobs. A total of 21 people have been assisted to create seven social enterprises. A highly successful "job subsidy" service has re-integrated most of the 850 job seekers by identifying employment opportunities in local businesses, public administrations and social enterprises, and by co-operating with employment agencies.*

***ACES** is an association formed by existing social enterprises and training agencies operating as intermediate labour market employers. Its INTEGRA project, in Monceau sur Sambre near Charleroi in the province of Hainaut, Belgium, has created a zoning d'économie sociale (social enterprise zone) on the site of a former coal mine. Rehabilitation work has been funded through the Objective 1 Operational Programme and ACES' mission is to help the creation and management of social enterprises whose priority aim is the employment of hard-to-place workers. Potential social entrepreneurs are assisted by a development agent who plans and co-ordinates with them a learning programme including market research, marketing, search for capital investment, financial management, personnel management, administrative, insurance and legal procedures. Enterprises are being created to sell goods and services in the market, as well as fulfil a number of social objectives: such as the employment of a proportion of low-qualified or disadvantaged employees or the provision of training. Total employment on the site has risen significantly for the past few years. In collaboration with the French transnational partner, a pathway of assistance for potential social entrepreneurs has been formalised and will be the basis of continuing activities.*

## **INTEGRA projects can be embryo enterprises**

The **TEXTIL 2000** project in Högsby, Sweden has assisted Bosnian refugee women to set up a co-operative that produces and markets textile products. The **ANDREA** project in Rome has been the starting point for the creation of a co-operative by ex-prisoners which operates a private counselling advice service for prisoners and their families.

## **INTEGRA projects are creators of new business-oriented qualifications**

**Training for social entrepreneurs** is an element in many projects. The **Diploma for social entrepreneurs** project in North-East Dublin has co-operated with Maynooth University to develop and run a one-year diploma course for potential social entrepreneurs. Participants all share a background of educational disadvantage. Certification is obtained from the National University of Ireland. By defining the profile of the social entrepreneur and opening a pathway to qualification, this pioneering course makes a timely contribution to the Irish policy priority of promoting the social economy.

## **CREATING YOUR OWN JOB: SELF EMPLOYMENT**

Self-employment is a traditional survival strategy for people in serious social and economic difficulty. In the new flexible labour market, opportunities arise for sub-contracting and filling small niches in the market, yet, as in other types of jobs, excluded people can be handicapped by lack of information, outdated skills and a lack of contacts in the business world. Indeed, those with the greatest risk-taking capacities may be tempted to try their luck in the parallel economy. Initiatives encouraging self-employment among excluded groups have considerable need of expansion.

INTEGRA projects promoting access to self-employment are still in a minority. They occur principally when the focus of vocational training is on occupations such as the construction sector, care services and teleworking. Particularly promising is the development of support for self-employment by immigrants or refugees.

*A particularly successful example of the promotion of self-employment by immigrants and refugees is the enterprise development centre, **Rinkeby Business House**, in Stockholm. It identifies would-be organisers of viable enterprises and supports them in the preparation and start-up phase of their new venture.*

*The district of Rinkeby has a population of 13,600 inhabitants of whom 80% are of foreign origin, coming from 65 countries and five different continents. The rate of unemployment is higher than the national average and the challenges of social integration exacerbate difficulties in finding employment. An initiative taken by the decentralised administration in this Stockholm district gave birth to this innovative project which has the co-operation of the City administration, employment services and local enterprises.*

*Activities include all the stages involved in the creation of an enterprise. Twenty potential entrepreneurs were selected from a much larger group of interested people who responded to local publicity. Places were available to unemployed immigrants over 20 years of age who were eligible for support from the Employment Office and who already had the necessary capital to start their enterprise. Selection was on the basis of commercial criteria, as well as personal capacities and motivation. These are essential conditions to ensure that new enterprises are stable enough to provide employment for the target group in the medium term. In accordance with equal opportunities' principles, half of the potential entrepreneurs are female. All live in the district and are from diverse foreign origins. They follow a training course in the creation and management of an enterprise within the Swedish context and also have the chance to meet with other successful entrepreneurs.*

*The Business House offers expertise and advice in marketing, legal aspects and accounting, provided by individuals who were recruited through contacts established by the municipality. In addition, it offers subsidised access to a marketing specialist based in the same location. This proximity enables experts to be consulted and, at the same time, contact to be maintained with the other members of the training course.*

*At the end of the 700 hours of training, each participant has set up a new enterprise. New enterprises include a design studio, a firm importing and exporting foodstuffs with Pakistan, an interpretation service, a newspaper for the Iraqi community in Scandinavia, a cleaning firm, a legal advice service, a tourist agency and a multi-media production studio. Three quarters of the firms were still in existence after two years and were intending to expand their activities.*

*Rinkeby Business House enabled market studies to be developed and financial aid to be negotiated. The local economy will also benefit from the fact that an office of a large bank has opened in the district. The Business House model has been disseminated to other regions in Sweden and this will enable the project's approach to be replicated in different settings.*

## **MODEL APPROACHES**

Developing access to work for vulnerable people is a challenge to public and private agencies. In INTEGRA, promoters find that partnership is not an option, it is a necessity. A majority of projects is based on a partnership process that gives overall direction, establishes common objectives, challenges participant organisations to adjust previous practice and promotes a sustainable approach. Incentives to combine resources and expertise arise from desires to rationalise services, to develop a neighbourhood, to improve intercultural relations or to make an enterprise more profitable.

### **INTEGRATED SERVICES APPROACHES**

Partnership approaches to facilitate access to employment for vulnerable groups often arise from grass-roots preoccupation with service efficiency. New venture ideas sometimes mature among local people and front-line workers. Others come from agencies which have been in contact with the same target group over many years or from the need to respond to new challenges in the social and labour market systems. The latter develop more vertical partnerships to ensure that new ways of working constitute a learning opportunity for relevant agencies at local, regional and national level.

A commitment to a partnership process from the design stage often results in the creation of a new form of service immediately accessible to vulnerable groups. Some key factors of success include:

- the development of a new role by social agencies with experience of working directly with the group concerned (health agencies, cultural services, housing authorities and prison authorities);
- a process of establishing trust with local enterprises;
- acknowledgement of different objectives and codes of professional conduct;
- new opportunities for partner agencies to adapt their approach to vulnerable groups;
- a willingness to involve representatives of the groups concerned.

### **Integrated approach to the development of a "one-stop-shop"**

Many people are bewildered, discouraged or side-tracked by the wide array of services which might assist them towards social integration and employment. To promote a more efficient and consistent approach, services and employers need to pool know-how and experience and generate new synergies. This learning process is challenging but can result in the creation of "one-stop shops" and integrated services.

*People suffering from HIV or AIDS who are seeking employment face various forms of discrimination and sometimes receive misleading information. **EUOTRAMP** (European Training Research Aids Multimedia Project), an Italian project based in Emilia Romagna, has set up a local network between voluntary organisations and public services to make services more efficient and approachable. The training institute Ageform has brought together public authorities in the fields of training, employment, health and social policy, trade unions, HIV-AIDS associations and a cultural centre, each of which have highly specialised roles and expertise.*

*Eight expert-led seminars for administrative staff in the partner organisations have created a mutual understanding of intervention strategies, professional codes of conduct and efficiency criteria. This has led to greater trust between organisations and a mutual adjustment of areas and methods of intervention. It resulted, as planned, in the development of joint action designed by the multi-disciplinary group. This included the adoption of a common model for voluntary workers' training, a public information campaign, a transnationally-relevant prevention strategy in prisons, a health awareness campaign for at-risk groups, a study of legal and social issues faced by HIV-AIDS sufferers in the workplace, and an integrated approach to service delivery.*

*Major behavioural and attitudinal changes have been observed in the course of the project, resulting in a simplification of the pathway by social, cultural, health and employment services. There are now 10 one-stop shops, based in the partner institutions (hospital, health centres, training centres etc.) which are managed by HIV-AIDS sufferers trained by the project. These offer a holistic approach to integration into employment. Information services are underpinned by a database which is updated daily.*

### **A quality employment service for the long-term unemployed can take the form of a local business development agency**

Such an agency may support the development of self-employment or the creation of social enterprises. The creation of a specialised agency requires a partnership approach based on a common assessment of needs and structured collaboration based on negotiated objectives. The functions undertaken by such specialised agency include:

- profiling and selection of potential entrepreneurs, with criteria adapted to skill levels and type of enterprise-creation opportunities in the local economy;
- strengthening of basic communication skills at the initial stage;
- personal advice and counselling supported by local information or employment services;
- teaching strategies adapted to local opportunities: training can be sub-contracted to local training establishments, structured in a modular fashion and accompanied by virtual or actual experience of elements of business management;
- use of culture and style of social relationships as positive factors in enterprise development;
- special preparation of training staff and development agents to cope with the needs and expectations of the target groups and to capitalise on their strengths;
- developing mutual support among potential entrepreneurs as a means of maintaining motivation and reinforcing learning.

*In the Sledderlo district of the city of Genk in Belgium, high rates of unemployment affect young people, women and immigrant workers particularly severely. Following the closure of the coal-mines, the area suffers a dynamic of social exclusion denoted, inter alia, by a low rate of school education, older housing and criminality. With the support of the Flemish programme to combat poverty, the municipality has for many years developed an integrated strategy for social and economic development. The STEBO association has set up the "New perspectives, new horizons" INTEGRA project to channel neighbourhood economic development towards the creation of enterprises by immigrant people who represent four fifth of the population.*

*The local consortium associates the local services, the local authorities and local residents in a common project: the redevelopment of the retail sector by firms created by immigrant people. Local authorities play a leading role in community development, support the core infrastructure of the project and assist with the dissemination of results. VIZO, the Flemish institute for enterprise advice and training has adapted its provision to the needs of local immigrant entrepreneurs and NCMV, the local SME association, organises the training elements. A training pathway has been established to take into account the skills and experience present among local immigrants. Following an investigation into the potential for redevelopment of the retail sector, STEBO has negotiated various forms of start-up support or subsidy and promoted the intercultural approach which has led to a revitalisation plan for the shopping street. In view of the dynamic generated by this neighbourhood based action, STEBO has been given responsibility for establishing a local economic development agency with special expertise in immigrant business creation to serve seven other municipalities.*

## NEIGHBOURHOOD-BASED APPROACHES

Broader approaches to social and economic integration provide a positive backdrop to job creation for vulnerable groups. INTEGRA gives priority to actions in disadvantaged urban areas, some of which can also be found in prosperous cities. In such area, people in great difficulty can become excluded from the labour market for long periods of time. Structural problems exacerbate the dangers of permanent exclusion. These can lead to the deterioration of infrastructure, withdrawal of public services, poverty and ill-health, recourse to the parallel economy, criminality or xenophobia.

INTEGRA neighbourhood-based projects capitalise on a collective commitment to integration objectives. They value local resources and indigenous assets: men and women, histories, cultures, buildings and skills. They mobilise actors from a wide range of services such as housing, culture, training, employment and environment. This raises many issues of institutional capacity, networking and partnership development and progress requires a willingness to make significant structural changes.

As the level of democratically elected bodies, nearest to the citizen, local governments often play a leading role in initiating and sustaining local partnership approaches to employment and training. They benefit from this immediate legitimacy in giving a new impulse to interagency co-operation for a better quality of life and work.

Integrated approaches for labour market initiatives in deprived urban neighbourhoods	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>New solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic approaches to individual integration pathways to take into account social, family, cultural and professional needs and aspirations and to reduce isolation;</li> <li>• New structures of representation for citizen involvement;</li> <li>• Integrated development of information services and training pathways;</li> <li>• Training of staff for new infrastructures funded via Structural Funds;</li> <li>• Activity and enterprise creation;</li> <li>• Investment trusts or other financial instruments to access start-up capital.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategic factors of effectiveness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interagency networking to change the modes of intervention of institutional actors;</li> <li>• Breaking down barriers and rivalries between and within local administrations;</li> <li>• Creation of new roles and professions for public service agents, associations and volunteers;</li> <li>• Community capacity-building;</li> <li>• Public campaigns to improve the "image" of the area;</li> <li>• Review of local potential for economic development together with business associations, large enterprises, local authorities and economic development agencies;</li> <li>• Attraction of external investment</li> <li>• Introduction of "social clauses" or equivalent in public sector contracts;</li> <li>• Direct involvement of employers as trainers or contractors;</li> <li>• Links to non-local growth sector enterprises.</li> </ul>

*The town of Saint-Denis, in the suburbs of Paris, is the promoter of the "Euro-Insertion" project, which has accompanied the transformation of a training-based policy into a learning-oriented initiative for the whole area. Despite its rich historical and cultural heritage, this city has undergone profound economic, social and physical change since the 1970s, with more people living in poverty, far from their roots, and a current unemployment rate of 17%. The local administration entrusted the association "Objective Employment" to develop new systems for social and employment integration. The action is based on a widescale partnership between public, private and professional partners in the fields of education, social and cultural work and employment. Economic development in the area is promoted by tapping into indigenous capacity linked to historical, cultural and economic assets. The project offers long-term unemployed people various pathways to employment: training in professions related to urban tourism (stained glass, artistic textiles and engraving), and business creation training through its "Local Initiative House". It has also built upon existing links between agencies and created new forms of collaboration and solidarity with the local population. A network has been created through which the progress of the various initiatives is continually monitored and the views of local people are taken into account.*

## INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES AND ANTI-RACISM

Discrimination practised against immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities and similar groups is often based on ignorance and fear. Organisations involved in INTEGRA projects progress along a learning curve and this is assisted by direct experience of immigrants who themselves seek to make their culture better known and understood.

Employers who employ workers from other cultures may become aware of the need to improve personnel relations. By agreeing to the placement of trainees from INTEGRA projects, they gain access to relevant experience and expertise. Personnel from the projects can assist them to run in-service training to improve intercultural relations.

Public organisations employing front-line workers in contact with people from other cultures can overcome communication difficulties, misunderstandings and delays by offering in-service training. Voluntary organisations, including associations of immigrants, develop structures familiarisation programmes and conflict-resolution training.



To various extent, media and broadcasting structures have opened their staffing and programming to other cultures. The media do not create racism and xenophobia but the pictures which they portray are often too negative. However, they can contribute to an atmosphere in which such attitudes can be successfully challenged. By improving training in media professions for residents from other cultures, influence can be brought upon the choice and quality of programmes and the development of "ethnic" broadcasting can be supported.

***Meer Kleur in de Media***, a project led by an association of ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands, offers an integration pathway to young people of foreign origin. This includes work experience placements of eight months negotiated with public broadcasting companies. These are a springboard towards standard temporary employment contracts of 1000 hours. Introducing the trainees to the working norms and culture of the broadcasting sector contributes to this success. The project also created an incentive for public broadcasting companies to introduce new recruitment practices sensitive to cultural difference, and in-service staff training in intercultural relations. A television broadcast, featuring the difficulties encountered by Dutch immigrants in Australia, had helped create a climate of interest in the life of immigrants in the Netherlands. The project has capitalised on this momentum to raise the public's awareness, and that of key executives in the industry, of the importance of presenting a positive image of immigrants and refugees. The project's approach has been replicated by its transnational partners in the UK, Germany and Ireland. Each put different emphasis on the key elements: identifying talented individuals, developing tailor-made vocational training programmes and accreditation, developing independent broadcasting companies, sensitising executives to the potential contribution of employees of foreign origin and developing co-operation with individual companies. The International Federation of Broadcasting Companies has proposed an Equal Opportunities Charter following the model already adopted in the Netherlands.

## PRIVATE SECTOR APPROACHES

Companies, consortia of SMEs and enterprise networks can play a role as promoters or active partners in INTEGRA projects. Although some are motivated by altruism, most weigh up the commercial advantages of an improved rapport with their potential workforce. Their roles include:

- nominating representatives to local partnership structures;
- developing partnerships with voluntary associations and public agencies;
- offering training placements to facilitate the updating of skills;
- allowing their personnel to become part-time trainers;
- offering trading contracts to enterprises in the intermediate labour market or the third sector;
- advising other companies on incentives available to them for employing long-term unemployed and other re-trained people from vulnerable groups;
- sharing with other companies their experience of co-operation with projects.

*Despite their competitive outlook, enterprises are prepared to co-operate with each other to develop their capacity to export. Export towards third countries is often hampered by the lack of qualified workers, conversant with trading practices in other countries. The transnational partnership **INTRAINING** takes up the challenge of turning workers originating from third countries into active partners in the development of exports for the host country's economy. In the Italian project, three enterprise associations have come together to create a training pathway leading to technical/commercial qualification or to an activity as an independent import-export consultant. Federpiemonte, a federation of industrial associations in Piedmont, AMMA (the association of metal industries), the Piedmont consortium for exterior trade, SMEs and Chambers of Commerce of Turin and the Piedmont, had already accumulated considerable expertise in training, in advising SMEs and in negotiating with public bodies.*

*"The countries of origin of Piedmont immigrants already absorb over 20% of the export trade of enterprises in our region" states the president of AMMA. In its first phase, INTRAINING trained 20 immigrants selected through the partner associations. They were qualified people forced to live in precarious or intermittent employment and coming from Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North and West Africa or Southeast Asia.*

*The project has benefited from the methodological and pedagogical know-how already acquired by its French and Spanish partners. In addition to courses in Italian and training in marketing, international commerce, management techniques, communication and human resources management, a tutorial system has guided and assessed each trainee throughout the pathway. At the end of a placement, enterprises have either employed them permanently or advised and supported those who wished to set up as independent consultants or to create their own enterprise.*

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Job-seekers facing particular difficulties and discrimination in the labour market can be effectively assisted to access employment. Given appropriate and sustained support, they can be integrated into ordinary jobs or can create enterprises. Some of these job-seekers require further periods of subsidised employment or employment in part-subsidised enterprises, before accessing the open labour market. The challenge to training and employment providers is to make effective programmes more widely available.

Evidence from INTEGRA projects suggests that a great deal of know-how already exists on how to develop effective programmes of social and economic integration. Despite the diversity of target groups and local circumstances, certain general recommendations can be made to improve practice. Because of their innovative character, INTEGRA projects have access to a level of resources that may not be available to other initiatives. Their efficiency should however not be judged solely on their short-term success in integrating people into employment. Good practice also demonstrates that a local or neighbourhood-based approach can change attitudes to groups such as immigrant workers and single parents, or people such as ex-offenders or substance abusers and make for a more cohesive socio-economic environment. Newly created activities and enterprises also provide much needed services at local level, at a reduced cost to the public purse.

The following recommendations have emerged from the work of project co-ordinators, employers, training agencies, NGOs, researchers, administrators and policy-makers who participated in the Transnational Thematic Work Group on Adapted Pathways and in the discussions at the INTEGRA conference. They are not always unique to programmes dealing with people in grave difficulty. Many apply to all employment programmes for the integration of unemployed people, who are all to a degree at risk of social and economic exclusion.

### **Ideas for employment project designers**

- Give full recognition to the prior experience and skills of people and their communities;
- Focus skills training on sectors and occupations with real prospects of local employment;
- Develop quality standards for work placements and intermediate labour markets;
- Develop support for business creation which attains competitive levels of productivity;
- Support the exit strategies of project participants by developing career planning and networking skills and providing records of achievements and qualification;
- Intervene on both supply and demand sides, by working with employers and business creators as well as with excluded people and specialist agencies;
- Develop good practice in empowering target groups and communities, based on political will to pursue public strategies for comprehensive change, the pooling of resources and the involvement of the target groups in decision-making;
- Acquire legitimacy to work with excluded people by including them or their representative organisations in the planning and implementation of the project;
- As an organisation of people from the groups concerned, develop sufficient capacity, with the help of existing INTEGRA projects, to compete successfully for project funding;
- Develop your organisation's long-term strategy, irrespective of the period of project funding;
- Consider anti-racism actions aimed at reducing the incidence of discrimination;
- Avoid further stigmatisation of the target groups by working with mixed groups of participants in terms of ethnicity, age or gender;
- Keep a focus on local dynamics and adopt a neighbourhood-based approach;
- Develop local information channels to reach target groups more effectively;
- Draw strength from transnational networks of regions and local authorities combating exclusion;
- Set yourself the goal of better informing professionals and employers of the life circumstances and capacities of the trainees.

### **Ideas for programme designers (national level)**

- Include recurrent experience of short spells of unemployment as an indicator of the risk of exclusion from the labour market;
- Give specific priority to projects developing adapted pathways to employment, neighbourhood-based initiatives, integrated approaches, self-employment and the creation of social enterprises;
- Demonstrate the benefits of pathways to employment to those responsible for immigration policies, prisons, drug prevention programmes or social services;
- Involve representatives of excluded people in the planning and implementation of local development strategies;
- Improve local information on likely future demand for employment, including low-skilled occupations and flexible employment;
- Customise assistance to business creation by vulnerable groups;
- Take a dynamic view of enterprises in the social economy and develop legal and other frameworks (where they do not already exist) to assist them in progressing towards greater viability;
- Develop tools to monitor the quality and cost-efficiency of the social economy, including its social benefits;
- Develop mechanisms which assist in expanding customer demand for personal and household services (chèques-services, dependency insurance, etc);
- Ease the way for the development of specialised work agencies and temporary work agencies.

### **Ideas for programme designers (European level)**

- Improve access to ESF for NGOs and foundations (publicity and information ; support for the capacity-building function of international NGOs and foundations);
- Develop assistance to accelerate the initial phase of development of transnational partnerships (comparative information on contexts ; methodology training ; access to specialised interpreters);
- Make empowerment one of the priorities in combating exclusion from the labour market and develop models of good practice;
- Make self-employment and business creation a priority in combating exclusion, including measures for immigrants and similar groups;
- Develop comparative quality criteria for the social economy.

## INTEGRA IN BRIEF

INTEGRA is one of the four strands of the EMPLOYMENT Community Initiative and aims to improve access to the labour market and the employability of vulnerable groups.

Member States implement EMPLOYMENT in partnership with the European Commission. National Support Structures (NSS) have also been established in each Member State to assist in the implementation of EMPLOYMENT, and the European Commission has additionally established a technical assistance office at European level, entitled EUROPS.

EMPLOYMENT is implemented in two phases: 1995-1997 and 1997-1999, involving two waves of projects, each project usually lasting between 2 and 3 years. In the period 1994-1999, the European Union contribution to INTEGRA will be 385 million ECU, mainly through the European Social Fund. This combined with the national contributions will bring the total budget to almost 750 million ECU.

EMPLOYMENT aims to identify new solutions to the problem of unemployment in the European Union by funding pilot projects. Projects should be innovative, collaborate transnationally with EMPLOYMENT projects in other Member States, adopt a bottom-up approach and seek a multiplier effect through evaluation and dissemination of their results.

In its first two years, the EMPLOYMENT Initiative supported projects in favour of vulnerable groups through the HORIZON strand. In July 1996, new guidelines were issued which established INTEGRA as a separate strand for disadvantaged groups while HORIZON continued to support actions for people with disabilities. A new emphasis was put on supporting strategies to combat racial discrimination and on local integrated approaches, especially in disadvantaged urban areas, which promote the active participation of target groups and persons concerned in decision-making processes.

INTEGRA offers a unique opportunity to experiment with new approaches which help those groups at most risk of exclusion to find their way towards employment - in particular, migrants, refugees and other similar groups which increasingly face negative discrimination, racism and xenophobia. Other target groups include long-term unemployed people, jobless single parents, the homeless, prisoners and ex-prisoners and substance abusers.

Supported measures include:

- the development of new models of access to a full range of services and for developing grass-roots capacities;
- assessment, counselling, training in basic skills and new skills;
- job creation including the development of social enterprises, self-employment and public-private partnerships;
- awareness-raising and the development of self-help networks.

Since 1995, nearly 500 projects in the HORIZON-Disadvantaged strand of the EMPLOYMENT Initiative have been working together in transnational partnerships to develop and test new models and practices in the field of reintegration into employment of the groups most at risk of exclusion. At the end of 1997, another 1,050 projects were selected by the Member States to take part in the new INTEGRA strand.