

Building the Information Society in Europe

A Pathway Approach to Employment Interventions for Disadvantaged Groups

May 2003





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for Disadvantaged Groups

IST Study Report
Information Society Technologies
(IST) Research Programme
European Commission

May 2003

Research team:

Dr. Susan O'Donnell

Dr. Debbie Ellen

Itech Research

Dr. Carmel Duggan

Kerill Dunne, M.A.

WRC Social and Economic Consultants


Additional fieldwork:

Chris Nicol

Fidelma Carolan

Trish Howard

Itech Research



This document is the final report of a study contracted by the European Commission's Information Society Technologies (IST) Research Programme (KISEIS Study, contract IST-2000-28333). The views expressed are those of the authors and may not be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the interview respondents across Europe who contributed their experiences, opinions and ideas to the study. The constructive comments of the reviewers of an earlier draft report are gratefully acknowledged.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Itech Research
Abbey House
15-17 Upper Abbey Street
Dublin 1 Ireland
info@itech-research.ie
www.itech-research.ie
Tel: (353) 1 872 4911
Fax: (353) 1 873 3917

WRC Social and Economic Consultants
4 Lower Ormond Quay
Dublin 1 Ireland
wrc@iol.ie
www.wrc.ie
Tel: (353) 1 872 3100
Fax: (353) 1 872 3840

IST Research Programme
European Commission
Information Society DG
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
ist@cec.eu.int
www.cordis.lu/ist
Fax: (32) 2 296 8388

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To facilitate networking, a website of projects in Europe and wider internationally is being developed - the Inclusion, ICT and Employment network: www.ite-network.org

report and web design by www.activelink.ie

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Executive summary

This report is the outcome of a study of EU EMPLOYMENT Initiative projects with actions aimed at building the information society. It will be useful for developing projects, programmes and policies to assist the transition of disadvantaged groups into sustainable employment in the information society.

The study explored how targeted interventions could engage with a pathway approach to employment and how they could harness the opportunities and tools of the information society to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged people in sustainable employment.

The research found that a pathway approach to interventions is a model of good practice in an information society context. A pathway approach means that the full set of specific barriers to employment experienced by different groups is recognised and a series of linked interventions and supports is put in place to address the various needs and to enable the person make the transition from marginalisation to employment.

The report includes guidelines that will be useful for developing and delivering more effective interventions for disadvantaged groups to increase their sustainable employment outcomes in the context of the information society.

The study is rooted in the European Union's strategy defined at the Lisbon European Council in 2000: long-term economic growth, full employment, social cohesion, and sustainable development in the knowledge-based society.

The fusion of employment policy with information society policy, and the reinforced commitment to combating social exclusion within both, presents challenges and opportunities for individual Member States and for the European Union overall.

On the one hand, the information society, new technologies and new methods of delivery can, in and of themselves, overcome some of the obstacles and barriers to social exclusion and labour market disadvantage. New methods of training, for example, can help to overcome problems of rural peripherality or disability. New forms of work within the information society can ensure that excluded groups have previously unavailable opportunities opened up to them.

At the same time, however, the groups experiencing social exclusion and labour market disadvantage are those most likely to be marginalised within the information society. This is a feature of the Union as a whole, of the individual Member States and indeed of all developed and developing countries.

The marginalisation within the information society, of already marginalised groups, is particularly problematic given the overall concerns identified and agreed at Lisbon. Inclusion in the knowledge society, and by extension into employment, is crucial if all of Europe's resources are to be harnessed for social and economic growth.

For this reason, the European Commission and Member States have acknowledged that targeted interventions are necessary to encourage a more inclusive information society. In particular Member States have been urged to provide women, the unemployed, inactive people and workers at risk of exclusion - including older workers, young people without qualifications, and people with disabilities - with ICT training and other learning that responds to their individual needs and requirements for employment.

A key lesson from the current study is that ICT skills training is only one part of a broader set of interventions - a pathway approach - necessary for the transition of women and men experiencing disadvantage into sustainable employment.

Policy Context for the Study

The policy context for the study is rooted in three long-established concerns and responses at EU-level. The main policy areas and policy instruments addressed by current study are:

European Employment Strategy and Employment Guidelines

- > Reduce disparities in access to the labour market
- > Ensure opportunities to ICT skills
- > Ensure possibility of progress in terms of pay and qualifications
- > Comprehensive approach towards disadvantaged persons
- > Corporate social responsibility (Emerging Concern)

EU Information Society Policy: eEurope 2005

- > Actions to provide disadvantaged adults with key skills for the knowledge society, taking advantage of e-learning

National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion and the Human Resource Community Initiative - EMPLOYMENT and now EQUAL

- > Exploit fully the potential of ICT
- > Ensure no-one is excluded from the knowledge-based society

The work of the ESDIS High-Level group

- > Mainstream basic ICT literacy for disadvantaged people
- > Ensure access to quality jobs in the information society
- > Ensure that activation measures translate into real benefits
- > Online placement and recruitment facilities
- > Integral approaches to exploiting ICT opportunities to people with disabilities
- > Increase public Internet access points

The Pathway Approach to Interventions

Considerable work has been done in Member States and at EU level on the nature of disadvantage as it impinges on labour market opportunities. This work has highlighted that barriers are complex, accumulative and originate in a wide range of spheres.

The current study's analysis of studies of labour market disadvantage in Europe identified numerous socio-economic restraints and barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups. These can be categorised into the following spheres: social and individual, geographic, community, cultural, economic, political and structural, and organisational.

Across Europe, many programmes have been developed for disadvantaged groups that seek to overcome the restraints and barriers they face in their attempts to secure sustainable employment. The current study focused on interventions that took place within the EU EMPLOYMENT Initiative, which operated between 1995 and 2000.

EMPLOYMENT was organised into four separate strands, each targeting a different disadvantaged group:

- > Women at work, unemployed or working in their communities
- > People experiencing social and economic disadvantage (in particular unemployed people and immigrants and ethnic minorities)
- > Unqualified and poorly qualified young people
- > People with disabilities including physical, psychological and mental disability

The EMPLOYMENT Initiative was a laboratory for testing innovative ways to combat exclusion in the labour market and it was understood that the learning generated by the Initiative could help inform policy and practice in Member States and at EU level.

One aspect of that learning relates to a model of good practice developed through analysis of the EMPLOYMENT Initiative: the Pathway Approach to interventions for disadvantaged people.

A pathway approach means that the full set of socio-economic barriers and restraints to employment is recognised. A series of linked interventions and supports are put in place before, during and after the training period to address the various needs and to enable the person to make the transition from marginalisation to employment.

The pathway approach encompasses the following five main interventions:

Contacting and motivating participants: Ensures that effective outreach mechanisms are in place and that the target groups are facilitated in every possible way to be aware of and receptive to opportunities.

Developing skills: Ensures quality training, ideally accredited, imparting relevant skills, and as far as possible, targeted at identified job opportunities. Vocational skills are accompanied by developing skills in areas such as literacy and communication.

Ensuring support for social and cultural needs: Ensures that cultural and other forms of diversity are acknowledged and respected and that all participants are empowered to become active citizens through understanding their values, legitimising prior knowledge and skills, providing information on citizens' rights, and increasing their capacity to participate in decision-making.

Providing employment and career guidance services: Ensures that employment and career guidance services for disadvantaged people are delivered in a client-friendly and flexible manner, provide good quality information on local employment and education and training opportunities, are accessible and able to support progression and career development.

Developing employment progression measures: Seeks to secure the actual movement into employment and to support participants therein. Specific actions include regular assessment of progress, evaluating and recording learning outcomes, supporting personal planning, familiarisation with the local work culture, and supporting mentors and supervisors.

"Building the Information Society" through EMPLOYMENT Interventions

The EMPLOYMENT Initiative predated the EU's first eEurope strategy. Nonetheless there was an awareness that groups experiencing labour market disadvantage could progress into information society employment and be assisted through the targeted use of ICT.

By 1997, when the second round of EMPLOYMENT projects had been selected, a new theme had been introduced: "building the information society." In that year, about 200 projects were

funded in Member States under EMPLOYMENT that identified as a high level of priority actions to build the information society. These actions aimed at preparing women and men experiencing disadvantage for employment in the information society and actions to use ICT to bring training and other services or resources to their target groups.

Across the 200 projects there were differences among Member States with regard to the number of the projects and the focus of the interventions. The countries with the highest number of these projects were the UK, Italy, Spain, Finland and Ireland. The different focus in each of the Member States reflected to some extent different employment and social integration priorities and opportunities perceived at national level in the 1990s.

The current study included fieldwork in the five Member States with the highest number of projects. The fieldwork included: in the UK, 14 in-depth interviews with five projects; in Italy, six in-depth interviews with three projects; in Spain, 10 in-depth interviews with three projects; in Finland, seven in-depth interviews with four projects; and in Ireland, 12 in-depth interviews with four projects. Those interviewed in all countries included project staff, former project participants, and employers of former participants.

The current study situated these projects aimed at building the information society within the context of the Pathway Approach. The projects studied included engagement with the following interventions and core elements:

Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups:

- > Reaching out to disadvantaged people
- > Motivating participants
- > Selecting participants for intervention
- > Using ICT for these activities

Developing skills:

- > Developing courses for specific skills, soft skills and practical skills
- > Basic ICT training
- > ICT training for employment and self-employment in information society sectors, for unspecified other sectors, for sheltered employment and for specified non-ICT sectors
- > Choosing certifications
- > Choosing trainers
- > Delivering the courses

Ensuring support for social and cultural activities:

- > Ensuring affordable training interventions
- > Ensuring childcare supports

- > Ensuring learning support and building peer support networks
- > Internet networks for cooperative learning and peer support
- > Ensuring cultural supports in culturally-diverse projects
- > Online communication across cultures
- > ICT tools for information on cultural integration and multiculturalism
- > Providing citizenship information
- > Using ICT to develop appropriate content online and off-line
- > Supporting decision-making

Providing employment and career guidance information:

- > Providing career guidance
- > Developing multimedia career guidance
- > Providing information on local employment opportunities
- > Using ICT to deliver local employment and career counselling services
- > ICT databases of local employment information

Developing employment progression measures:

- > Engaging with employers
- > Providing work placements
- > Supporting business start-ups and self-employment
- > Providing supported and transitional employment
- > ICT for supported employment
- > Mentoring former participants in employment
- > Teleconferencing for mentoring
- > Tracking progression in employment
- > Using the Internet for mentoring and tracking

Lessons from the EMPLOYMENT Initiative

The fieldwork for the study was conducted in 2002 in five Member States: the UK, Italy, Finland, Ireland and Spain. The fieldwork was not an evaluation of the projects - the 49 in-depth interviews conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants were confidential.

The study investigated the appropriateness of the model of good practice - the Pathway Approach - to integrating disadvantaged people into sustainable employment in the context of the information society. Three key questions were answered through analysis of the fieldwork.

Is a pathway approach relevant in the context of the information society?

The fieldwork clearly demonstrated that a pathway approach does have relevance for the information society and is an appropriate model for moving disadvantaged people into employment in the information society.

One key area of weakness identified by the fieldwork was the lack of linkages with employers; this area needs considerable strengthening for future interventions. A second key finding was the different types of skills development that must occur.

The study clearly showed that the pathway model of developing soft skills and practical skills alongside vocational skills is an important feature of interventions to prepare disadvantaged people for employment in the information society. It is particularly important to generate awareness of this issue in the context of the ongoing review of the European Employment Guidelines and the implementation of eEurope policy, which focuses on ICT training only.

Are there specific factors that need to be taken on board when implementing a pathway approach in the context of the information society?

The fieldwork identified specific issues in relation to interventions within the pathway approach that need to be considered in an information society context. These range from overcoming lack of awareness of ICT and information society opportunities right through to monitoring progression in a fast-changing sector. This report presents guidelines to address these factors.

Are there culturally-specific issues that differentiate a pathway approach across different Member States?

The most significant difference identified between the five countries studied was the number and proportion of EMPLOYMENT projects with priority actions to build the information society. This ranged from over one-third of all EMPLOYMENT projects in 1997 in the UK and Finland to less than 10 percent in Ireland, Italy and Spain. The study did not determine the reasons for this difference; however it can best be explained by the economic and social integration opportunities and priorities in the mid-1990s when the EMPLOYMENT Interventions were being developed in the various countries.

There was little significant variation across the five countries studied in the implementation of the pathway approach. In some instances, specific interventions within the overall approach were modified to better address local circumstances. For example, outreach mechanisms or the provision of cultural supports were tailored to the specific target groups. Progression routes reflected the proximity of relevant potential employers.

On the basis of the fieldwork a generic pathway approach can be identified, within which the logic and modus operandi appear consistent across a wide range of national contexts and local settings. The generic model and guidelines associated with it are discussed in the final chapter.

Guidelines for a Pathway Approach for Information Society Interventions

Guidelines are proposed for using the five main interventions of the pathway approach in an information society context. These guidelines are for practitioners - those responsible for developing and implementing programmes for disadvantaged groups - and for policy-makers. Where appropriate, guidelines are also identified for researchers.

Guidelines for contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups

FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- > In providing information on ICT-related courses available, language should be kept simple and the use of jargon avoided.
- > Successful past participants who have made careers in the information society can be used to highlight the benefits of participation in training.
- > Community based open days involving IT taster sessions can help overcome fear of IT training environments.
- > Small group sessions, emphasising the creative and fun aspects of ICT and facilitated by supportive staff, can help allay fears about ICT and returning to education.
- > Conducting taster ICT training courses for potential participants in their own homes, or in their local communities, are particularly useful with people with low self-esteem.
- > Informal interviews with potential participants and basic IT tests are useful in demystifying new technologies and in assessing capabilities.

FOR POLICY-MAKERS:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for contacting and motivating these groups to participate.
- > There is good potential for using the Internet to provide information on local ICT training opportunities, if at the same time Internet access is facilitated for disadvantaged groups,

such as making accessible local public Internet access points available to disadvantaged groups.

FOR RESEARCHERS:

- > The study identified a need for research into how Internet-based information on local ICT training opportunities can be made more accessible to disadvantaged groups.

Guidelines for developing skills

FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- > It is important that the transmission of technical skills can accommodate progression routes for participants, both within training and within employment.
- > Appropriate certification can help ensure these progression routes, but challenges arise in regard to (a) ensuring that employers will recognise certification awarded, (b) ensuring that national systems of accreditation are compatible with industry standards and (c) finding mechanisms to ensure that training provision keeps abreast of industry developments.
- > It is important therefore to ensure that local employers recognise and value the ICT skills certification provided by training interventions and that these are targeted at the needs of local employers.
- > Where professional ICT certifications are provided, a careful choice is necessary between the range of industry certifications and national qualifications. For both, it is important to ensure that training and certifications are responsive to the needs and developments within the industry.
- > Training delivery methods are important for disadvantaged groups: the choice of trainers is crucial in providing an empathetic training environment and practical, hands-on experience and role playing methods are valuable approaches.
- > Trainers of technical, soft and practical skills, in addition to teaching skills, need to have good communication skills, the ability to empathise with and be sensitive to the target groups, and understand the cultural context of the target group.
- > ICT training should concentrate on face-to-face delivery and personal contact and support. Where ICT is used to deliver training, the focus should be on practical work uses and be task-oriented. Examples of this are using the Internet for research and job searching.

- > While a range of ICT applications can be used for particular training interventions, some solutions may not be suitable for certain groups: for example women returners may prefer to leave their homes for training rather than avail themselves of distance learning.
- > Small community based organisations, which can play an important role in reaching out to and engaging the target groups, may not have the necessary IT infrastructure to deliver training interventions. Strategic partnerships at local level could help ensure co-operation between relevant actors.
- > Practical and soft skills required by participants include communication skills, confidence building, personal development, teamwork, job search, writing letters of application, mock interviews and developing CVs.
- > The provision of practical and soft skills should also seek to improve participants' ability to deal with discrimination in ICT sector employment.
- > Skills training should also be mindful of the entrepreneurial opportunities that exist and should seek to develop skills in this area.
- > Participants need to be made aware of employers' needs in relation to soft skills and practical skills and that these skills are just as necessary as ICT skills to ensure sustainable employment in the information society.

FOR POLICY-MAKERS:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for development of skills: not only ICT skills but also soft skills and practical skills.
- > Programmes need to use appropriate certification to help ensure employment progression routes for disadvantaged groups. Parallel policy approaches are needed to ensure that (a) employers will recognise the certification awarded, and (b) national systems of accreditation are compatible with industry standards.
- > The study was inconclusive regarding the potential of e-learning aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups; policy approaches for these groups should not focus on e-learning in preference to other training delivery methods.

FOR RESEARCHERS:

- > The study identified a need for further research into the potential of e-learning (specifically, distance learning) aimed at employment in the information society for disadvantaged groups.

- > The study identified a need for further research into ICT skills certification progression routes for employment for disadvantaged groups, focusing in particular on industry certifications that may be recognised across the Member States.

Guidelines for providing cultural and social support

FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- > The costs associated with providing cultural support and more particularly with providing social supports must be factored into training interventions. Childcare costs and transport costs are just two of the potential barriers to participation that disadvantaged people face.
- > It is important to develop peer-support networks that can be maintained after training. Such networks allow former participants to share experiences and strategies for dealing with discrimination in IT sector employment and further ICT skills training in employment.
- > There is good potential to use Internet for peer-support networks; this highlights the need to ensure that Internet skills are developed during the intervention and Internet access is assured afterwards.
- > There is good potential for using ICT tools for information on cultural integration and multiculturalism and for using Web-based information generally for citizenship information; however this information needs to be updated regularly to remain useful.
- > The provision of information on employer and employee rights and more generally on employment rights is particularly relevant as much of the ICT sector does not have trade union representation and participants may not otherwise have access to this information.
- > The provision of information on corporate social responsibility in the context of local employment, particularly on the need for more flexible and part-time employment opportunities in the ICT sector, is a valuable dimension.

FOR POLICY-MAKERS:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for providing cultural support and social supports such as childcare and transport costs.
- > There is good potential to use the Internet for peer-support networks that can assist sustainable employment outcomes; again this highlights the need for policies

to ensure that accessible local public Internet access points are made available to disadvantaged groups.

FOR RESEARCHERS:

- > The study identified that childcare supports and needs are important aspects of interventions for sustainable employment in the information society for disadvantaged groups; however no ICT-related tools or solutions were identified in the fieldwork. Further research could focus on how ICT could be used to meet the childcare needs of disadvantaged groups both in training and in employment.

Guidelines for providing employment and career guidance services

FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- > Provide information to participants on discrimination that may be experienced by employees in the IT sector, particularly by women.
- > Provide up-to-date information on specific ICT skills training progression paths for ICT sector occupations.
- > For interventions delivering industry ICT certifications, participants need to be aware of the ongoing cost of taking new exams and keeping up the certification in employment.
- > Practical information is needed on salaries and progression in ICT employment that would allow people with child care responsibilities (usually women) to make practical choices about whether they can afford to work or how best to combine work with childcare responsibilities.
- > Provide information on local flexible and part-time employment opportunities in ICT fields.
- > There are good possibilities for making this information available on the Internet as an integral part of a training intervention. It is vital that this material is updated regularly. Participants can use the Web to find employment and career information but they will need to be guided as the information may be outdated and not related to local needs.

FOR POLICY-MAKERS:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for employment and career guidance services, provided and delivered by qualified and resourced staff who are knowledgeable about ICT-based careers.

- > There is good potential for using the Internet to provide information on local employment and career opportunities related to specific ICT skills; again, however for information aimed at disadvantaged groups it is necessary to ensure that accessible local public Internet access points are made available to these groups.

FOR RESEARCHERS:

- > The study identified a need for further research into how Internet-based information on local ICT employment and career opportunities can be made more accessible to disadvantaged groups.

Guidelines for developing employment progression measures

FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- > Programmes will need to make a focused and pro-active research effort into the skills needs of local employers - for ICT skills and soft skills. This research process may be a good way to engage with and build stronger links with employers.
- > Strategies for work placements should be developed that involve closer contact between the employer and project to ensure placements are tailored for specific ICT skills certifications.
- > Networking with local employers and local job centres can also serve to forge stronger relationships between training interventions and the industry. Networking allows local firms to become familiar with the type of training provided and to consider these projects as a source of recruitment.

The study highlighted the fact that both mentoring and tracking progression in employment were a very weak element in the interventions. Three approaches are suggested:

- > Develop strategies for increasing staff awareness of the need for mentoring in ICT sector employment.
- > Develop strategies for overcoming staff resistance to tracking interventions, especially using ICT tools for tracking.
- > Develop strategies for increasing awareness among staff of tracking measures as a research tool.

FOR POLICY-MAKERS:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for employment progression measures: particularly engaging with employers, providing work placements related to ICT skills qualifications, and mentoring and tracking former participants in employment.
- > The study clearly supported ongoing efforts to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures into employment and social policy and information society policy. In particular, ongoing efforts are needed by employers to ensure that disadvantaged groups do not face restraints and barriers in their attempts to acquire further ICT training and skills certifications in employment. CSR measures are also needed to ensure ICT work placements for disadvantaged groups.
- > The European Commission has recognised that evaluation of the effectiveness of measures to integrate disadvantaged persons into the labour market is severely hampered by a lack of statistical data. This study underlined that ongoing tracking of former participants of interventions will be necessary to ensure effective evaluation of these programmes in an information society context.

FOR RESEARCHERS:

- > The study identified a need for research into how corporate social responsibility can be encouraged to increase the progression of disadvantaged groups in information society employment.
- > The study identified a need for further research into ICT mentoring and tracking tools, particularly those based on email.
- > The study identified a need for further research into the potential of teleworking as an employment option for disadvantaged groups.

The Policy Context for the Study

This report is the outcome of a study of EU EMPLOYMENT Initiative projects with actions aimed at building the information society. The projects engaged with a “pathway approach” to reintegrating disadvantaged people into the labour market and employment. Their engagement offers important lessons for future interventions for sustainable employment in the information society for women and men experiencing disadvantage.

Many reports and statements from the European Commission have encouraged Member States to tap the information society's potential for disadvantaged groups. Expanding information society industries have opened up new employment opportunities. Information and communication technologies, in particular the Internet, can distribute knowledge resources more equitably and overcome traditional barriers to mobility and geographic distance. ICT can generate services and networks of support for those experiencing disadvantage.

Member States have been urged to provide women, the unemployed, inactive people and workers at risk of exclusion - including older workers, young people without qualifications, and people with disabilities - with ICT training and other learning that responds to their individual needs and requirements for employment.

The Commission and Member States have acknowledged that market-led expansion of the information society will not on its own tackle social exclusion and that targeted interventions are necessary to encourage inclusion.

The focus of these interventions has been ICT skills training. A key lesson from the current study is that ICT skills training is only one part of a broader set of interventions – a pathway approach – necessary for the transition of disadvantaged groups into sustainable employment in an information society context.

A pathway approach means that the full set of specific barriers to employment experienced by different disadvantaged groups is recognised, and a series of linked interventions is put in place to address the various needs and to enable the person experiencing disadvantage make the transition from marginalisation to employment.

The study explored how targeted interventions could engage with a pathway approach to employment and how they could harness the opportunities and tools of the information society to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged people in sustainable employment.

Policy Context

The policy context for the study is rooted in three long-established concerns and responses at an EU level. These are:

- > Policy and responses in relation to employment, as evidenced in particular by the European Employment Strategy
- > Policy and responses in relation to the information society, especially the eEurope strategy and also the work of the ESDIS High-Level group
- > Concerns and responses in relation to social exclusion, primarily the National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion and the Human Resource Community Initiative, EMPLOYMENT and now EQUAL

Employment policy

The European Employment Strategy (EES) had its genesis in the Amsterdam Treaty, which introduced a chapter on employment. The Strategy was subsequently put into operation following the Luxembourg summit in 1998 but its origins can be traced back to 1994 when the Essen Summit identified five principles or points of action to promote socio-economic development in Europe. These were: promoting investment in vocational training; making growth more employment-intensive; reducing indirect labour costs; increasing the effectiveness of labour market policy; and reinforcing measures to help the groups hardest hit by unemployment: young people, the long-term unemployed, older workers, and women.

The principles enshrined at Essen were significant in a number of respects not least the extent to which they were embedded in and reflected the European social model. The EES is in many ways a direct successor to Essen, formalising the overall approach to socio-economic growth at an EU level, within the actions of the individual Member States.

The EES expanded upon the Essen strategy by developing European Employment Guidelines, which are incorporated into National Action Plans (NAPS) for employment in each Member State. The NAPS are submitted to the Commission for approval and form the basis for annual reporting on progress. The Guidelines themselves are also reviewed annually and modified to take account of new developments or concerns and some modifications, reflecting the development of the information society, have already been made.

At the Lisbon European Council in 2000, the European Union defined a strategy aimed at long-term economic growth, full employment, social cohesion, and sustainable development in the knowledge-based society. Agreement soon developed that the EES should be designed as a key tool to underpin the Lisbon strategy in an enlarged EU and to contribute to economic and social cohesion.

The original Employment Guidelines contained only one explicit reference to ICT and the information society. The revisions made at Lisbon introduced new guidelines calling for eLearning for all citizens (Guideline 5) and for all workers to have IS literacy by 2003 (Guideline 15). This effectively means that elements of the eEurope strategy are now embedded within the National Action Plans for employment in the Member States.

New draft guidelines for the EES are currently in development and will be formally adopted later in 2003. The new Employment Guidelines will have three overarching objectives, outlined in Chart 1.1.

CHART 1.1: CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED NEW (2003) EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

Core objective	Themes and concerns
1. Full employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising the employment rate overall - Raising the employment rate for women - Raising the employment rate for older workers
2. Quality and productivity at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfaction with pay and working conditions - Health and safety at work - Flexible work organisation and working time - Balance between flexibility and security - Increasing productivity through investment in human capital, technology, and work organisation
3. Cohesion and an inclusive labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing unemployment - Reducing disparities in access to the labour market both in socio-economic and regional terms - Ensuring opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to enter and remain in the labour market (particularly ICT skills) - Ensuring possibility of progress in terms of pay and qualifications - Comprehensive approach towards disadvantaged persons and all inactive persons wanting to work

The concerns of the current study can be situated within the third core objective of the new Employment Guidelines: cohesion and an inclusive labour market. Specifically, the study addresses the concerns for a comprehensive approach towards disadvantaged persons and all

inactive persons wanting to work and to ensure opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to enter and remain in the labour market.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an emerging policy area at EU-level that is also relevant to the current study and to employment policy. CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.

In their 2002 communication, *Corporate Social Responsibility: A business contribution to Sustainable Development*, the European Commission noted that socially responsible initiatives by business have a long tradition in Europe. Today, however, there is a more developed understanding that CSR can be managed strategically. Companies are aware they can contribute to sustainable development by managing their operations to enhance economic growth and increase competitiveness – while at the same time promoting social responsibility.

The European Commission proposed that CSR should be integrated into all EU policies. In the employment and social affairs policy, CSR is expected to improve: quality employment; lifelong learning; information, consultation and participation of workers; equal opportunities; integration of people with disabilities; and anticipation of industrial change and restructuring.

Information Society Policy

EU policy for the information society had its genesis in 1994 with the publication of the Bangemann Report, *Europe and the Global Information Society: Recommendations to the European Council*. Subsequently, the High Level Group of Experts was established to consider issues relating to the EU's progress towards the information society. This group reported in 1996 and later the Green Paper: *People First, Living and Working in the European Information Society* was published by the Commission.

In 1999, the ongoing changes in information and communication technologies provided both the opportunity and the means for change. For this reason, the eEurope Initiative was launched by the European Commission in December 1999 with the objective of bringing all European citizens online.

In June 2002, eEurope 2005 was adopted by the European Council in Seville. Its objective is to provide a favourable environment for private investment and for the creation of new jobs, to boost productivity, to modernise public services, and to give everyone the opportunity to participate in the global information society.

The focus of eEurope 2005 is: connecting public administrations, interactive public services, online health services, development of broadband networks, and legislation for e-business.

eEurope 2005 states that eInclusion is a policy priority across all action lines. The current study can be situated within the e-learning action line of eEurope 2005 and the specific action: re-skilling for the knowledge society.

This action proposes that by end 2003, Member States, where appropriate using structural funds and supported by the Commission, should launch actions to provide adults (e.g. the unemployed, women returning to the labour market, etc.) with the key skills needed for the knowledge society, to improve their employability and overall quality of life. Key skills include basic computer skills (digital literacy) and higher-order skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, project management, etc. These actions will take advantage of the possibilities offered by e-learning.

Social Inclusion Policy

Concern with social exclusion has been high on the EU policy agenda for many years. In 1993, the White Paper on Social Policy signalled clearly the EU's priority of combating exclusion and promoting social cohesion. Since then, substantial investment has been made in tackling social exclusion, both through mainstream structural fund expenditure, and through special funds and programmes targeted exclusively at disadvantage in its various forms. Responses in relation to social exclusion include the Human Resource Community Initiative, EMPLOYMENT and now EQUAL.

The concern with social exclusion has always found expression in the major policy documents and strategies of the European Union. This is clear in the references already made to the Essen strategy, in the European Employment Strategy and in the reports relating to the information society.

At the Lisbon summit, this commitment was reinforced and greater integration introduced across the three elements of EU policy - employment policy, information policy and policies to combat exclusion. Two much repeated quotes from that Summit demonstrate this. The first of these relates to the overall aspiration of the Lisbon strategy:

"to make the European Union by the year 2010, the most competitive dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion."

The second states: *"the best way to achieve social inclusion is through a job."*

After the Lisbon summit, a set of objectives for the fight against poverty and social exclusion were adopted by the European Council. They formed the basis for the first National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion (NAPinclusion). The objectives are currently being revised

and have maintained a focus on preventing the risks of exclusion in the knowledge-based society. A core Objective is: *To exploit fully the potential of the knowledge-based society and of new information and communication technologies and ensure that no-one is excluded, taking particular account of the needs of people with disabilities.*

Social Exclusion and the Information Society: New Opportunities, New Challenges

The fusion of employment policy with information society policy, and the reinforced commitment to combating social exclusion within both, presents challenges and opportunities for the individual Member States and for the European Union overall.

On the one hand, it is increasingly recognised that the knowledge society, new technologies and new methods of delivery can, in and of themselves, overcome some of the obstacles and barriers to social exclusion and labour market disadvantage. New methods of training, for example, can overcome problems of rural peripherality or disability. New forms of work within the knowledge society can ensure that excluded groups have previously unavailable opportunities opened up to them.

At the same time, however, it is now established beyond question that the groups experiencing social exclusion and labour market disadvantage are those most likely to be marginalised within the knowledge society. This is a feature of the Union as a whole, of the individual Member States, and indeed of all developed and developing countries.

The marginalisation within the information society, of already marginalised groups, is particularly problematic given the overall concerns identified and agreed at Lisbon. Inclusion in the knowledge society and by extension into employment is crucial if all of Europe's resources are to be harnessed for social and economic growth.

Similarly, the aim of achieving more and better jobs for all will be frustrated if everyone is not equally well facilitated to avail of these. Finally, marginalisation within the information society presents a real obstacle to achieving social cohesion within the EU and to combating social exclusion. Ironically, and most worrying of all perhaps, is the potential for social exclusion and social cohesion to be intensified if greater equality is not ensured within the knowledge society.

To address these concerns, the High Level Group "Employment and Social Dimensions of the Information Society" (ESDIS) coordinated by the Employment and Social Affairs DG has drawn up several key reports on e-Inclusion and exploiting the contribution of the information society to enhancing quality in employment. These reports identified the challenges and highlighted the barriers facing disadvantaged people and the areas lagging behind in the information society. They also presented policy strategies to exploit the potential of the information society for disadvantaged people.

ESDIS identified the key issues related to social inclusion and information society employment as:

- > Mainstreaming basic ICT literacy for disadvantaged people (offered in a way responding to the specific needs of people disadvantaged in the labour market)
- > Moving beyond basic ICT literacy to access quality jobs (focus on activation measures that lead disadvantaged people into information society jobs that are sustainable, well-paid, and secure)
- > Ensuring that activation measures translate into real benefits (focus on interventions targeted at information society jobs that are in demand and with high quality potential)
- > Developing online placement and recruitment facilities (ICT to support access to the labour market by providing online services matching job offers and job seekers more easily at a wider scale)
- > Developing an integral approach to exploit ICT opportunities to people with disabilities (ICT opportunities need to be an integral part of a job strategy for people with disabilities)
- > Widening access to public Internet access points (public Internet access points are essential for bringing disadvantaged people into information society opportunities)

Summary: Policy concerns for the study

To conclude, the policy areas and policy instruments addressed by the current study are summarised in Chart 1.2. (next page)

Chart 1.2: Summary of policy concerns for the study

Policy/strategy area and instrument(s)	Policy concern
<i>European Employment Strategy</i> Employment Guidelines/NAPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce disparities in access to the labour market - Ensure opportunities to ICT skills - Ensure possibility of progress in terms of pay and qualifications - Comprehensive approach towards disadvantaged persons - (emerging) corporate social responsibility
<i>EU information society policy</i> e-Europe 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiate actions to provide disadvantaged adults with key skills needed for the knowledge society, taking advantage of e-learning
<i>Social inclusion policy and objectives</i> EQUAL/NAP-inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploit fully the potential of ICT - Ensure no-one excluded from the knowledge-based society
<i>All the above</i> ESDIS process and policy papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainstream basic ICT literacy for disadvantaged people - Ensure access to quality jobs - Ensure activation measures translate into real benefits - Online placement and recruitment facilities - Integral approach to exploit ICT opportunities to people with disabilities - Increase public Internet access points

The Pathway Approach to Interventions

As outlined in the previous chapter, EU Employment policy and strategies can be traced back to the 1994 Essen Summit that identified core principles to promote socio-economic development in Europe. One of these was to reinforce measures to help the groups hardest hit by unemployment: young people, the long-term unemployed, older workers, and women.

Considerable work has been done since that time in individual Member States and at EU level on the nature of disadvantage as it impinges on labour market opportunities.

This work has highlighted that the barriers to participation are complex, accumulative and originate in a wide range of spheres. It follows that interventions to address these barriers must be focused on the precise nature of the barrier and must be targeted at the relevant sphere within which it originates.

It is also the case that the greater the extent to which barriers arising in different spheres are experienced by discrete groups, the greater is the level of disadvantage, including labour market disadvantage. Thus those groups who experience extensive and multiple barriers to participation in employment can be understood to be more distant from the labour market than those who experience fewer barriers.

Again, it follows that the former groups will need more interventions and more varied interventions than the latter. Those experiencing disadvantage in the labour market are most vulnerable to the risk of exclusion, while the reproduction of labour market disadvantage is also highest among those experiencing social exclusion.

Socio-economic barriers to employment for disadvantaged people

The current study's analysis of a number of studies on labour market disadvantage in Europe can be summarised in Chart 2.1, an overview of the socio-economic barriers and restraints to sustainable employment for disadvantaged groups.

Chart 2.1: Socio-economic restraints and barriers to employment for disadvantaged people

Sphere	- Restraint or barrier
Social and individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of or inadequate food, shelter or clothing - Disabilities - Financial problems and related stress - Difficult family environment or onerous family responsibilities - Low self-esteem - Literacy problems - Low level of formal education and qualifications - Lack skills and qualifications needed for employment - Negative experience of education - Psycho-social problems - Drug or alcohol abuse - Disaffection for or alienation from the democratic system - Disenfranchisement from democratic processes
Geographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural isolation - Disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods with inter-generational unemployment - Lack of local access to training and education opportunities
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of cohesive local approaches to enabling the transition to employment - Lack of social capital networks with those in employment - Information deficits relating to training and employment opportunities
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language barriers experienced by immigrants and refugees - Cultural differences experienced by immigrants and refugees - Experience of racism on the part of ethnic minorities - Experience of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, family status
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Few or no jobs available - Lack of childcare provision to allow those with children to work - Disincentives to work arising from the welfare/tax system (poverty trap)
Political and structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of state provision for social and services and infrastructure - Government policies restricting eligibility to training programmes - Lack of accessible information on citizenship rights and issues - Constraints on entitlement to work for asylum seekers
Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training organisations and employers using restrictive recruitment practices - Training organisations having restrictive eligibility criteria, training approaches, venues and structures - Training organisations lacking social supports for trainees - Training programmes and employers lacking engagement with the client group

Addressing socio-economic barriers: the Employment Initiative

Across Europe, many programmes have been developed for disadvantaged groups that recognise and seek to overcome the restraints and barriers they face in their attempts to secure sustainable employment. The current study focused on interventions that took place within the Employment and Social Fund (ESF) programme, the EMPLOYMENT Initiative.

EMPLOYMENT, which operated between 1995 and 2000, was specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups with the aim of promoting social solidarity and equal opportunities, contributing to the development of human resources, and improving access to the labour market.

EMPLOYMENT was organised into four separate strands - NOW, Integra, Youthstart and Horizon - each targeting a different social group with specific aims appropriate to each group:

- > NOW: Women at work, unemployed or working in their communities
- > Integra: People experiencing social and economic disadvantage (in particular unemployed people and immigrants and ethnic minorities)
- > Youthstart: Unqualified and poorly qualified young people
- > Horizon: People with disabilities including physical, psychological and mental disability

EMPLOYMENT, similar to other Community initiatives, had a strategic importance well beyond the scale of the financial resources allocated to it. Because of its precise targeting of issues and social groups, it enjoyed a greater capacity to reach and engage with the most marginalised groups. The high level of innovation associated with the actions undertaken within EMPLOYMENT meant it could be more flexible, more adaptable, and often closer to the target group than mainstream interventions.

The Initiative's greater capacity to reach excluded groups was reflected in the range of target groups covered by projects in EMPLOYMENT. These included prisoners and ex-prisoners, drug users, homeless people, immigrants and asylum seekers, people with mental, physical, sensory and psychological disabilities, people who are long-term unemployed, unskilled and without formal education, young people at risk within the education system or without qualifications, women experiencing barriers to employment or to advancement in employment, lone parents, gypsies and travellers.

The level and nature of the socio-economic and labour market difficulties experienced by these different groups varies extensively. So too does their proximity to the job market - or to put

that another way, their distance from the job market. For some categories, relatively minor interventions in terms of training and skill acquisition, or relatively minor modifications to work place systems, are sufficient to redress the difficulties experienced.

In contrast, other categories experience profound difficulties stemming not only from factors such as lack of skills or educational competencies but also personal difficulties, psycho-social problems and the experience of stigma or other forms of prejudices.

Model of good practice: the Pathway Approach to interventions

The EMPLOYMENT Initiative was essentially a laboratory for testing innovative ways to combat exclusion in the labour market and it was understood that the learning generated by the Initiative could help inform policy and practice in the Member States and at EU level.

One aspect of that learning relates to the development of "pathway approaches" to employment for disadvantaged people. A pathway approach means that the full set of specific barriers to employment experienced by different groups is recognised. A series of linked interventions and supports are put in place before, during and after the training period to address the various needs and to enable the person make the transition from marginalisation to employment.

The varying elements of intervention required by vulnerable groups as they seek to re-enter employment developed within EMPLOYMENT were identified by the Commission in a range of publications exploring how vulnerable groups could be integrated into economic activity. These publications identified the pathway approach as encompassing the following main interventions:

- > Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups
- > Developing skills
- > Ensuring social and cultural supports
- > Providing employment and career guidance services
- > Providing employment progression measures

Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups

The prospect of employment may not be enough to motivate women and men experiencing disadvantage to participate in education and training interventions. Many experience low self-esteem and literacy problems.

Interventions to contact and motivate participants seek to overcome these and other barriers, ensure that effective outreach mechanisms are in place, and ensure that the target groups are

facilitated in every possible way to be aware of and receptive to opportunities. The core elements of these interventions are:

- > Reaching out to disadvantaged groups
- > Motivating participants
- > Selecting participants for intervention

Approaches include reaching out to potential participants through local associations and agencies and neighbourhood groups, avoiding misunderstandings about the expected outcomes of the intervention, creating public awareness and dispelling prejudices about disadvantage, and developing initial skills assessment tools adapted to the target group.

Developing skills

Skills training for women and men experiencing disadvantage needs to be embedded in a wider concept of skills development that goes well beyond the issues usually considered part of a mainstream training course.

Interventions to develop skills for women and men experiencing disadvantage seek to overcome restraints such as negative experience of education. They ensure quality training, ideally accredited, imparting relevant skills and, as far as possible, targeted at identified job opportunities. The core elements of developing skills are:

- > Developing courses for specific skills, soft skills and practical skills
- > Choosing certifications
- > Choosing trainers
- > Delivering the courses

Approaches include legitimising prior knowledge and skills, using or developing systems of certification, offering training in core skills and soft skills (language, literacy, numeracy, interaction, teamwork) and designing training suited to adult learners. Soft skills are different from vocational skills (or subject specific skills) because soft skills apply a broad set of skills, knowledge and understanding to real life situations. A range of practical skills are also necessary to improve the transition of disadvantaged groups into sustainable employment, such as preparation for job interviews and preparing a CV.

Ensuring social and cultural supports

Interventions for women and men experiencing disadvantage need to provide supports for many barriers that inhibit participation on a training intervention, including financial problems and related stress and a difficult family environment or onerous family responsibilities.

Disadvantaged groups may experience disaffection for or alienation from the democratic system and democratic processes. Immigrants and refugees may experience cultural differences that inhibit participation. More generally vulnerable groups lack information on their citizenship rights and entitlements.

Interventions to ensure social and cultural supports aim at overcoming these and other restraints and barriers. They ensure that cultural and other forms of diversity are acknowledged and respected and that all participants are empowered to become active citizens through providing a range of practical supports, understanding their values, providing information on citizens rights, and increasing their capacity to participate in decision-making. The core elements are:

- > Ensuring affordable training interventions
- > Ensuring childcare supports
- > Ensuring learner support and building peer support networks
- > Ensuring cultural support in culturally-diverse projects
- > Providing citizenship information
- > Supporting decision-making

Approaches include providing assistance with childcare, housing, money management and health issues as required, facilitating a more stable home and family environment, listening to participants' needs, and trying to understand cultural values.

Approches also encompass providing information on citizens' rights and responsibilities, encouraging commitment as an active citizen, and exploring cultural differences. Specific activities may be aimed at generating capacities and opportunities to participate in decision-making at project level and in the local community.

Intercultural approaches include introducing cross-cultural awareness in project activities, favouring mixed groups of participants in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, and training staff and participants in intercultural communication.

Providing employment and career guidance services

Disadvantaged groups often lack social capital networks with those in employment and have information deficits relating to training and employment opportunities. Many disadvantaged neighbourhoods lack cohesive local approaches to enabling the transition to employment.

This intervention of the pathway approach forms a bridge between the training intervention and the world of work. For some people, employment might be the best and most feasible

option after training. For others further training or development may be necessary before making the transition to employment.

Employment and career guidance services for disadvantaged people must be delivered in a client-friendly and flexible manner, provide good quality information on local employment and education and training opportunities, be accessible, and be able to support progression and career development. The two core elements are:

- > Providing career guidance
- > Providing information on local employment opportunities

Approaches include developing career planning skills, providing information on local labour market opportunities and services, supporting personal career planning, and developing job-search skills.

Providing employment progression measures

Vulnerable groups experience a range of barriers inhibiting a smooth progression from interventions into sustainable employment. These can include having few jobs available locally, especially in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods with inter-generational unemployment and in isolated rural areas.

Many women and men experiencing disadvantage lack professional work experience. They need supports to help them overcome discrimination in the workplace and barriers to progression such as lack of childcare provision, disincentives to work arising from the welfare/tax system, and lack of knowledge about further training and progression routes.

Interventions providing employment progression measures seek to overcome these restraints and barriers. They secure the actual movement into employment and to support participants therein. Specific actions include regular assessment of progress, evaluating and recording learning outcomes, supporting personal planning, familiarisation with the local work culture, and supporting mentors and supervisors. The core elements are:

- > Engaging with employers
- > Providing work placements
- > Supporting business start-ups and self-employment
- > Providing supported and transitional employment
- > Mentoring former participants in employment
- > Tracking progression in employment

Approaches include familiarisation with the local work culture, establishing support for supervisors or mentors, evaluating and recording learning outcomes, building in regular assessment of progress, and formalising records of achievement.

Specific approaches for work experience include negotiating the conditions and expected outcomes of job placements, providing direct support during job placements, and planning job placements that: lead to subsequent employment, offer experience of jobs in demand in the local community, and establish a pattern of trainee support that improves their integration as new employees.

Summary: Main interventions and core elements of the Pathway Approach

The main interventions of the Pathway Approach to employment and the core elements of each are summarised in Chart 2.2. (*next page*)

Chart 2.2: Summary of Pathway Approach

Main interventions of a Pathway Approach	Core elements
<p>Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups This intervention ensures that effective outreach mechanisms are in place and that the target groups are facilitated in every possible way to be aware of and receptive to opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reaching out to disadvantaged groups - Motivating participants - Selecting participants for intervention
<p>Developing skills This intervention ensures quality training, ideally accredited, imparting relevant skills and, as far as possible, targeted at identified job opportunities. As necessary, this is accompanied by developing skills in areas such as literacy and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing courses for specific skills, soft skills and practical skills - Choosing certifications - Choosing trainers - Delivering the courses
<p>Ensuring support for social and cultural needs This intervention ensures that cultural and other forms of diversity are acknowledged and respected and that all participants are empowered to become active citizens through understanding their values, legitimising prior knowledge and skills, providing information on citizens rights and increasing their capacity to participate in decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring affordable training interventions - Ensuring childcare supports - Ensuring learner support and building peer support networks - Ensuring cultural support in culturally-diverse projects - Providing citizenship information - Supporting decision-making
<p>Providing employment and career guidance services Employment and career guidance services for disadvantaged people must be delivered in a client-friendly and flexible manner, provide good quality information on local employment opportunities and education and training opportunities, be accessible and be able to support progression and career development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing career guidance - Providing information on local employment opportunities
<p>Developing employment progression measures This intervention seeks to secure the actual movement into employment and to support participants therein. Specific actions include regular assessment of progress, evaluating and recording learning outcomes, supporting personal planning, familiarisation with the local work culture, and supporting mentors and supervisors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging with employers - Providing work placements - Supporting business start-ups and self-employment - Providing supported and transitional employment - Mentoring former participants in employment - Tracking progression in employment

The pathway approach in an information society context

The pathway approach is recognised as a model of good practice for assisting the transition of women and men experiencing disadvantage into sustainable employment. The current study revisited this model of good practice in an information society context.

The impact of the information society on employment is continuously growing. The information society has had a positive impact on the quality of jobs – through increased responsibilities, adaptable skills, new forms of work organisation, new opportunities for flexibility and work-life balance, and access to new labour market opportunities.

The current study explored how targeted interventions could harness the opportunities and tools of the information society to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged people in sustainable employment. Three key questions were given particular consideration:

- > Is the pathway approach to employment appropriate in an information society context?
- > If so, are there specific issues arising from the information society that need to be included in a pathway approach to employment in an information society context?
- > Is the pathway approach to employment in the information society culturally specific, or is it generic across the European Union?

These questions are explored in the following two chapters of this report.

"Building the Information Society" through EMPLOYMENT Interventions

As described in the previous chapter, the EMPLOYMENT Initiative which operated from 1995 to 2000 was targeted at disadvantaged groups with the aim of promoting social solidarity and equal opportunities, contributing to the development of human resources, and improving access to the labour market.

The emergence of EMPLOYMENT predated the European Union's first Information Society policy, the eEurope strategy. Nonetheless there was an awareness that groups experiencing labour market disadvantage could progress into information society employment and be assisted through the targeted use of new technologies.

The Operational Programmes for EMPLOYMENT included a small number of actions directly referring to new technologies, such as "training for skills related to use of technologies at work" and "new approaches to the integration of young people, including open and distance learning."

Almost all the Operational Programmes of the Member States did incorporate themes directly referring to new technologies, with various forms of teleworking for disabled people and distance learning for younger people being the main mechanisms through which these concerns were operationalised.

By 1997, when the second round of EMPLOYMENT projects had been selected, a new theme had been introduced: "building the information society." In that year, approximately 200 projects were funded in the Member States under EMPLOYMENT that identified as a high level of priority actions to build the information society.

Information society actions in the context of the Pathway Approach

Across the 200 projects with "building the information society" actions, it is possible to identify interventions covering a continuum of activities and objectives - in effect a pathway approach based on the tools and opportunities presented by the information society. These included actions aimed at preparing people for employment in the information society and actions using ICT to bring training and other services and or resources to their target groups.

Quite often, projects combined the core interventions in the pathway approach - contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups, developing skills, ensuring social and cultural supports, providing employment and career guidance services, providing employment progression measures - with specific priority actions to build the information society.

Training was the primary intervention of more than half the projects. Basic ICT training was the most common type of training intervention, followed by specific ICT training aimed at employment in different sectors, including employment in information society sectors (primarily multimedia), and other sectors (teleworking, environmental sector, tourism and cultural sectors, sheltered and supported employment, and unspecified employment). Other training interventions were aimed at enterprise development and self employment in the information society sectors, social economy enterprise, or unspecified sectors.

Advice, guidance and progression measures were the primary interventions of almost one-quarter of the projects. These included local information services, integrated services for youth, local employment services, training networks, data systems and information banks, and website development.

Social integration measures and tools were the primary interventions of about one-fifth of the projects. These included personal and social development, career development, local development, and social and economic integration. Provision of web sites and online services was a focus of some of these activities.

The interventions delivered were determined by the needs of the target groups. For example, some projects focused on very marginalised groups and others on groups needing a less intense level of intervention. Interventions ranged from actions to secure the social integration of very marginalised groups (for example prisoners and drug users) to actions seeking to equip people for entry to high level jobs in the information society. Common to all projects was the perception that the information society is both an opportunity and a means to address disadvantage and exclusion.

Focus and projects in different Member States

Across the 200 projects with a priority action aimed at "building the information society," there were differences among Member States with regard to the number of projects and the focus of the interventions. The countries with the highest number of these projects were the UK, Italy, Spain, Finland and Ireland. The UK had more than 100 such projects. Italy had 38, Spain had 20, Finland had 16 and Ireland had seven. Most of the other Member States had only one or two such projects.

The different focus in each of the Member States reflected to some extent different employment and social integration priorities at national level in the 1990s. The study did not determine why some countries in 1997 had more of these types of interventions than others.

United Kingdom

In the 1997 round of EMPLOYMENT, the UK had more than 300 projects overall. About 30 percent - more than 100 projects - had a "building the information society" objective. Among these projects were a high proportion aimed at two target groups: women (often women returners) and people with disabilities.

The most common intervention across these projects was ICT skills training aimed at employment or self-employment in information society sectors and progression routes to higher skills training in IT.

Specific actions in an information society context included: training in Internet skills, multimedia and graphic design; developing a multimedia CV and career guidance tool; call-centre training; teleworker training; training by distance learning; and training in professional IT skills certifications.

The fieldwork for the study looked at five projects in the UK delivering these types of interventions and actions.

ODYSSEY project

Target group: women returners

This project used multimedia and telematics technologies to provide women returners with progression routes to higher skills training in IT. Training included Internet, multimedia, graphic design, video and sound editing. Trainees each developed a multimedia CV that mapped their life journey. The project also developed a multimedia career guidance tool to encourage women to enter IT jobs and training. The training organisation also delivers a range of other ICT training courses to women.

ZEPHYR project

Target group: unemployed women

This project provided call-centre training to enable unemployed women to gain employment in the call-centre industry. The programme also included an element of teleworker training to enable participants to experience teleworking first-hand. Participants gained experience of handling live call-centre traffic in the training centre. The qualifications gained by participants included a range of national vocational qualifications for teleworkers and call-centre operators.

Euro Key Skills project

Target group: women returners and women in work

This project helped women returners and women in work to develop new skills, using new technology and online learning methods, to improve their confidence and gain experience to

enhance their employability. The project delivered a series of training courses to develop IT skills, confidence building and tasters in a range of subjects and work experience.

Women Into Systems Management project

Target group: unemployed women

This project aimed to move women into employment in the ICT sector. It identified the local skills shortages in IT and delivered training leading to three IT certifications including a professional certification that qualified participants to be service technicians. The training organisation also delivers a range of other ICT training courses for women.

ICT 2000 project

Target group: unemployed people

The project delivered a range of ICT training courses leading first to basic and then professional-level qualifications in IT. The project was focused on IT training and did not include the wider range of soft skills and practical skills for employment. The training organisation also delivers a range of other IT training programmes to disadvantaged groups, all of which lead to IT certifications.

The fieldwork for the current study included 14 in-depth interviews in the UK, conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants of these five projects.

Italy

In the 1997 round of EMPLOYMENT, Italy had more than 800 projects overall. About four percent - 38 projects - had a "building the information society" objective. Almost all these projects were aimed at people experiencing social and economic disadvantage, and in particular immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Among these projects, the most common intervention was social integration measures and tools. Specific actions in an information society context included: using ICT tools to provide information on cultural integration; developing information services to immigrants; Internet networks for cooperative learning; and increasing information about women in society and promoting women's access to decision-making.

The fieldwork for the study looked at three projects in Italy delivering these types of interventions and actions:

Agenzia Informativa project

Target group: Arabic-speaking immigrants

The project created an information agency run by Arabic-speaking immigrants which then

provided information to non-EU immigrants. The main activity was a vocational training course for "Experts in inter-ethnic and inter-cultural communication." The participants learned entrepreneurial skills and at the end of the course created an information cooperative to provide information to other immigrants.

Helpdesk Operator for Immigrant Services project

Target group: immigrants

The project delivered training and integration measures and work placements aimed at integration of and employment for immigrants. Training included basic IT skills and research using the Web. After finishing the course participants worked as freelance contractors with social sector employers providing services to immigrants.

DEA Project

Target group: women returners and unemployed women

This project aimed to create new job opportunities for women operating in the information field by creating a press agency to collect and disseminate news and information. It aimed to valorise women's role in the development of the information society by increasing information about women in society and promoting skills acquisition by women and their access to decision-making.

The fieldwork for the current study included six in-depth interviews in Italy, conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants of these three projects.

Spain

In the 1997 round of EMPLOYMENT, Spain had almost 700 projects overall. About three percent - 20 projects - had a "building the information society" objective. Many of these projects were aimed at women and disadvantaged youth.

Among these projects, the most common interventions were skills training aimed at non-ICT sector industries, and advice, guidance and progression measures and tools.

Specific actions in an information society context included: counselling and guidance for business creation using IT skills; website development; using the Internet for peer support networks; and skills training for teleworkers.

The fieldwork for the study looked at three projects in Spain delivering these types of interventions and actions:

C-TEST project

Target group: unemployed women and women returners

The project created a teleworking and teleservices centre where women could drop in, meet regularly, and follow modular training programmes in telematics and multimedia and share new ICT tools. The centre was a support structure used to link teleworkers and client-enterprises. It also promoted women's entrepreneurship in the enterprise services sector.

VIC-DONA project

Target group: women returners, unemployed women, women with low or no qualifications, single parents

This project provided counselling, guidance and training for business creation. The project delivered training in future-oriented sectors of the economy with an emphasis on new technologies. The course consisted primarily of a simulation exercise whereby the participants created a company and its website. The training organisation also delivers a range of other training courses for immigrants and the long-term unemployed.

Nuevas Trabajadoras project

Target group: women returners, unemployed women, women with low or no qualifications, single parents

The project conducted a study of the needs of enterprises in terms of teleworking and then delivered training to women wishing to be teleworkers. The training included practical uses of the Internet such as Web searches, using Internet chat and email. The work placement element aimed at employment in non-ICT sectors.

The fieldwork for the current study included 10 in-depth interviews in Spain, conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants of these three projects.

Finland

In the 1997 round of EMPLOYMENT, Finland had 40 projects overall. About 40 percent - 16 projects - had a "building the information society" objective. The target groups for these projects included a high proportion of people with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, and immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Among these projects, the most common interventions were social integration measures and tools, and advice, guidance and progression measures and tools.

Specific actions in an information society context included: Internet-based peer support networks; developing supported employment options for IT work; basic ICT training

for better integration of people with mental health difficulties; and using ICT tools for communicating information about people with disabilities.

The fieldwork for the study looked at four projects in Finland delivering these types of interventions and actions:

EUROPLUS project

Target group: unemployed youth, young people with low or now qualifications, young people with special learning needs

The project encouraged young people under 20 years of age to take their place in society and working life based on partnership and participation in civil society. The main focus was development of soft skills, personal development and identification of life goals. The IT training element was delivered off-site by outside trainers. The delivery organisation also delivers a range of interventions aimed at integrating people with mental health problems into employment and society.

Project 2000

Target group: migrant workers, ethnic minorities and refugees

The project established support systems primarily for migrant workers and refugees by creating small groups on the basis of common aims. The training and group work supported the participants' initiative to find and develop their own resources. The networking took place not only physically but also through the Internet and was aimed at increasing their chances for social and cultural integration. The delivery organisation also provides a range of social supports and services for immigrants.

Mainstreaming project

Target group: long-term unemployed, mentally disabled, people with special learning needs

The project worked to integrate lessons learned from a series of projects into mainstream policy and programming. The projects included a range of interventions to help people to integrate socially and economically into the community through supported employment, social firms, clubhouse-model, or self-employment. The project also created a network of information centres to coach and train ICT skills to persons with mental ill-health and other disabilities.

The Message project

Target group: people with physical disabilities

The project trained people with disabilities to work as communication assistants. The participants produced information for employers and co-workers and social service organisations about disabilities. A core aim of the project was to develop the capacity of people with disabilities to challenge public attitudes about people with disabilities and to support and encourage both employers and dis-

abled people themselves. The IT training was outsourced and included Internet and multimedia. The fieldwork for the current study included seven in-depth interviews in Finland, conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants of these four projects.

Ireland

In the 1997 round of EMPLOYMENT, Ireland had almost 130 projects overall. About five percent - 7 projects - had a "building the information society" objective. These projects covered the range of target groups - from disadvantaged youth to people with disabilities and people experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

Among these projects were interventions aimed at advice and guidance, training to develop ICT skills for employment and enterprise development in ICT sectors, and progression measures to higher levels of skills development.

Specific actions in an information society context included: developing peer-support networks in the context of ICT learning; training in multimedia authoring; and professional-level ICT training.

The fieldwork for the study looked at four projects in Ireland delivering these types of interventions and actions:

The Highway Cafe project

Target group: young people under 20, young people with low or no qualifications

The project created a cafe that acted as a gateway to the labour market for disadvantaged young people. It enhanced the marketable skills of young people and encouraged adaptation to the information society. The participants acquired IT skills. The cafe facility offered other young people in the area the opportunity to increase their IT skills, increase their learning generally, and develop peer support and peer learning networks.

Clann Lir project

Target group: young people under 20, young people with low or no qualifications

The project delivered training in basic IT skills, multimedia authoring, communication skills, personal development and employment skills. The IT training ended in a diploma in multimedia authoring that was accredited by a university and recognised by employers. Most of the training was delivered in mobile training units that travelled to different centres in an Irish-speaking area of the country.

Fasttrack to Information Technology (FIT) project

Target group: long-term unemployed

The FIT project was designed to meet labour shortages in the IT industry while creating job opportunities for the long-term unemployed. FIT is an industry-driven project delivered in partnership with state and community-based training organisations. The training provided included a range of basic and professional-level IT certifications and led to work placements in the ICT industry.

Self-start project

Target group: people with physical disabilities

The project provided people with disabilities with the supports and skills needed to set up their own businesses. The aim was to encourage entrepreneurs in the information technology sector but the range of enterprises set up by participants encompassed a wider range of enterprises such as wood-working. The project included establishing a business support centre and mentoring to new entrepreneurs. The IT training element led to a recognised basic IT certification.

The fieldwork for the current study included 12 in-depth interviews in Ireland, conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants of these four projects.

Summary: Building the information society in the context of the Pathway Approach

In summary, Chart 3 illustrates the actions across the five Member States aimed at building the information society in the context of the pathway approach to employment interventions.

The next chapter discusses the findings of the fieldwork - how the projects delivered these interventions, highlighting common elements of good practice and issues of common concern.

Chart 3: Pathway approach and information society context

Pathway Approach intervention and core elements	Information society context of interventions and focus in different Member States
<p>Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reaching out to disadvantaged groups - Motivating participants - Selecting participants for intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using ICT to provide information on local training opportunities - Developing online programmes to support capacity building <p>Some elements across all countries</p>
<p>Developing skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing courses for specific skills, soft skills and practical skills - Choosing certifications - Choosing trainers - Delivering the courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic ICT skills training - ICT training for employment and self-employment in IS sectors (multimedia, call-centre, teleworker, professional-level ICT) - ICT training for employment and self-employment (unspecified) - ICT training for sheltered employment - ICT training for employment and self-employment in a specified non-IS area <p>Basic ICT skills: All countries Skills for IS sectors: Primarily the UK and Ireland Teleworking skills: Primarily the UK and Spain</p>
<p>Ensuring support for social and cultural needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring affordable training interventions - Ensuring childcare supports - Ensuring learner support and building peer support networks - Ensuring cultural support in culturally-diverse projects - Providing citizenship information - Supporting decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICT tools for information on cultural integration and multiculturalism - Using ICT to develop appropriate content online and offline - Internet networks for cooperative learning and peer support - Online communications across cultures - Counselling and guidance for business creation using IT skills - Web based information to support citizenship - Web based programmes to promote cultural acceptance <p>Primarily in Italy, Finland and Spain</p>
<p>Providing employment and career guidance services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing career guidance - Providing information on local employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing multimedia career guidance - Using ICT to deliver local employment and career counselling services - Online career planning - Establishing ICT databanks of local employment information <p>Primarily in the UK and Spain</p>
<p>Developing employment progression measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging with employers - Providing work placements - Supporting business start-ups and self-employment - Providing supported and transitional employment - Mentoring former participants in employment - Tracking progression in employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using the Internet for mentoring and tracking - ICT to link with employers - ICT for supported employment - Teleconferencing for mentoring <p>Some elements across all countries</p>

Lessons from the EMPLOYMENT Initiative

As discussed in Chapter 2, a key question for the study was: Is the pathway approach to employment appropriate in an information society context?

The previous chapter outlined a range of actions by EMPLOYMENT projects aimed at building the information society. These actions were carried out in the context of a pathway approach, a model of good practice which recognises the specific barriers to employment experienced by disadvantaged groups and puts in place a series of linked interventions and supports addressing the person's needs and enabling them to make the transition from marginalisation to employment.

The five main interventions in the pathway approach are:

- 1: Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups
- 2: Developing skills
- 3: Ensuring support for social and cultural needs
- 4: Providing employment and career guidance services
- 5: Developing employment progression measures

This chapter presents an overview of how the projects with a building the information society objective engaged with the pathway approach, highlighting in particular the information society aspects of that engagement.

The fieldwork

The fieldwork explored how targeted interventions could engage with a pathway approach to employment and how they could harness the opportunities and tools of the information society to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged people in sustainable employment.

The fieldwork for the study was conducted in five Member States: the UK, Italy, Finland, Ireland and Spain. As described in the previous chapter, 49 in-depth interviews were conducted with staff, former participants, and employers of former participants of projects with a "building the information society" objective.

The study was not an evaluation of these projects and the interviews were confidential. The focus of the interviews was learning how the projects had engaged with the pathway approach to interventions in the context of building the information society, highlighting strategies and good practice.

The fieldwork was conducted in 2002. Given that the projects had in most cases ended two or more years before the interviews were conducted, lessons were also gathered from interviewees who had experience with similar projects delivered more recently.

The interviews included:

- > 23 interviews with former project participants - 17 women and six men, including four entrepreneurs and four self-employed contract workers. One was unemployed at the time of the interview; the remaining 22 worked in a variety of employment and self-employment positions, all using IT: IT trainers (four), social or community services workers (four), IT and communication services (two), clerical support worker, office administrator, IT consultant, team manager in a call centre, customer service in a large insurance company, doctor's assistant, land surveyor for architects, wood carver and furniture maker, web designer, publishing services, journalism, and helpdesk operator for immigrant services.
- > 17 interviews with former project staff working with organisations that had delivered the projects. These included: six community-based training centres, three community colleges, two private training centres, two local economic development agencies, a technical university, a national health research centre, a support centre for migrant workers, and two national voluntary organisations for people with disabilities.
- > Nine interviews with employers of former participants, including: an IT training company, a large insurance company, a municipal government, a regional government, a computing and telecommunications services company, a heating systems company, a public sector social services agency, and an information services company.

As described in Chapter 2, three key questions were given particular consideration when analysing the fieldwork findings:

- > Is a pathway approach relevant in the context of the information society?
- > If yes, are there specific factors that need to be taken on board when implementing a pathway approach in the context of the information society?
- > Are there culturally specific issues that differentiate a pathway approach across different Member States?

Contacting and motivating participants

The pathway approach identifies the function of initial contact and motivation interventions as activities ensuring that effective outreach mechanisms are in place and that the target groups are facilitated in every possible way to be aware of and receptive to opportunities.

REACHING OUT TO DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Some differences existed between the countries studied but there were common approaches for reaching out to hard-to-reach groups. Some forms of outreach were more appropriate and more effective in some circumstances than others.

In general, outreach strategies involved direct contact with potential participants or with other agencies that have such contact. Successful strategies included:

- > Networking with government agencies and community groups to make them aware of IT courses and disseminate the information within their networks to people who could point potential participants in that direction
- > Using past participants of the course, particularly those who had achieved careers in IT, as role models and to encourage word-of-mouth in the community
- > Advertising in areas of congregation - such as cinemas and religious centres and job centres - using simple messages that avoid IT jargon; this method was particularly good in diverse communities
- > Leaflet drops in housing estates, again avoiding IT jargon
- > Holding open days in a local community centre that included an IT taster session and focuses on the benefits of IT
- > Offering access to computer training suites to local community groups working with the target group
- > Using local radio and newspapers; limited by the extent to which the target group accessed these media

QUOTE: Normally when courses are aimed at everyone we put information in job centres or youth information centres. We also send information to the press - local newspapers - but these don't reach everyone because not everyone buys them. We go especially for centres for immigrants; these are strong groups, such as the Association of Moroccan Women - we always stay in contact with them for this kind of thing. (translation)

Staff member of project for immigrants, Italy

Internet use for reaching out to potential participants was very underdeveloped and not recommended because of the low rates of Internet access by people experiencing disadvantage. The exceptions were some interventions involving training for professional ICT skills that used Web pages and email lists of past participants for promoting the projects and finding potential participants.

MOTIVATING PARTICIPANTS

The extent to which participants needed to be motivated to engage with an ICT intervention depended to a degree on their prior computer experience. Many disadvantaged groups were not comfortable with computers and motivation activities focused on overcoming hesitations about the technology. Successful strategies in an information society context included:

- > Allaying personal fears about ICT and returning to education through small group sessions with computers facilitated by motivated and supportive staff
- > Conducting taster ICT training courses for participants in their own homes or local communities, for those with particularly low confidence and low self-esteem

Other elements were also very significant:

- > Ensuring that practical support, such as training allowances, travel allowances and childcare support was in place for initial motivation activities
- > Highlighting the positive outcomes of the course and displaying the opportunities available to those who completed it

QUOTE: You have to demonstrate that this course won't finish like other courses. I strongly feel that if they say "come and do a training course to work on a machine, or a mechanical course or a course on the Internet"- I know a lot of people who've done courses like this who never found work, so you need to demonstrate that the course will follow through with the student afterwards. The course needs to help people get a job. (translation)

Former participant of project for immigrants, Italy

ICT was more successfully integrated into motivation activities. There were opportunities for more creative use of ICT, particularly multimedia, for motivation activities. One example from the fieldwork was online gaming for disadvantaged youth.

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

Selection processes had to balance between ensuring that the right individuals for the IT intervention were recruited on the one hand, and on the other hand, that the most disadvantaged individuals had a chance to be selected for the intervention. Successful strategies were:

- > Informal interviews, either in person or by phone, that provided staff with an opportunity to demystify ICT
- > Basic IT tests to assess the IT capabilities of potential participants; much preferred over aptitude tests and good for interventions offering training at different levels
- > Introductory filter courses to assess the suitability and capability for different IT training options; particularly good for large organisations with different courses on offer

Aptitude tests are a standard method for selecting participants for mainstream ICT training but this was not favoured by the projects because they can be intimidating to disadvantaged groups. Formal criteria and standardised application forms were also not favoured by projects. This finding suggests that practitioners should be aware of the need to develop non-standard ways of selecting disadvantaged participants for ICT training.

Developing skills

Within a pathway approach in an information society context, three kinds of skills need to be developed: IT skills, soft skills, and practical skills for employment.

The needs for and general approaches to soft skills and practical skills development were consistent across the countries studied.

The need for developing skills in basic IT literacy was also consistent across the countries studied. Progressing participants to more advanced ICT skills was more a focus of projects in the UK and Ireland. ICT skills training was embedded in a wider concept of skills development that goes well beyond the issues usually considered part of an ICT training course.

Soft skills are different from vocational skills (or subject specific skills) because soft skills apply a broad set of skills, knowledge and understanding to real life situations. Almost all the

projects included this kind of skills training, and for some it was just as important or more important than ICT skills training.

DEVELOPING ICT SKILLS COURSES

ICT sector employment is fast moving, with new skills sets emerging as quickly as new applications and processes are developed. Basic ICT literacy adds value to other skills but ICT skills need to be continually updated. Without the necessary skills or the capacity to acquire those skills, disadvantaged people can move into "information society" jobs that are unsustainable, with low-pay and no job security.

A core challenge for developing ICT skills courses is ensuring that the skills needs of the participants are balanced with the needs of local employers. On the one hand skills courses need to be developed with the particular needs of the target group in mind - for example a mix of ICT skills and personal development skills for women returners will ensure confidence. On the other hand, local employers often have specific needs for ICT skills and participants without these skills will not be confident that they will be able to find a job when the project ends.

QUOTE: If you are going to train people to work in the IT industry they have to have the skills that industry needs. At the minute some of the training courses that government are promoting are not what the industry needs. Government can't respond as quickly as the industry changes. Certain skills become common and other skills are in demand; training schemes don't change quickly enough. They are still turning out MCSEs when really there are enough MCSEs. What they need to be doing is CISCO programming or XML. But once you set up a training programme, for example in XML, it takes you a year to set it up and recruit and another year to train, and by then the industry has moved on to something else.
Employer of former participant of project for women, UK

Recognised skills certifications were an important element of the projects studied in the UK and Ireland that focused on developing higher-level professional ICT skills but not in those studied in Finland, Spain or Italy that focused on a broader range of skills. In these countries, certifications were bespoke - developed for the particular project - or else participants were provided with a document outlining what had been covered on the course and their attendance details.

The ECDL, currently the most widely recognised ICT skills certification, was at the time of the EMPLOYMENT interventions known and used primarily in the UK, Ireland and Finland, among the countries studied. The ECDL certification was the most common ICT skills certification mentioned in the fieldwork.

Ensuring progression routes with ICT training and choosing the right IT skills certifications posed considerable challenges to interventions aimed at delivering higher-level professional ICT skills certifications. Three difficulties with ICT skills certifications were identified in the field-work, all of which have implications for future interventions in the ICT area for disadvantaged groups.

The first is the challenge of gaining recognition of skills certifications. Employers in some areas were slow to recognise the certifications used by training programmes. The second difficulty is that national certifications developed by state agencies were not always geared to the needs of employers. As well, national qualifications and certifications are developed by government bodies in specific national settings and are not necessarily recognised by employers outside the country. National qualifications were also seen as more general than industry qualifications.

In contrast, industry certifications in the ICT field include a range of certifications developed by private sector organisations or foundations - such as ECDL (the European Computer Driving Licence) the Microsoft MOUS or Certified Professional range of certifications or the CompTIA A+. The vocational nature of industry-certified courses was seen as valuable. In general, industry certifications are developed to meet the needs of the ICT sector or to certify competence with commercial ICT products and are recognised across national borders.

A third challenge however is that the curriculum and exam structure for many of the professional-level industry certifications (such as the Microsoft Professional family) are continually being revised to meet the emerging needs of employers. These ongoing changes made it difficult for training organisations to adapt and develop new courses. As well, participants in training and those who have moved into employment need to keep taking exams as the software develops (for example Microsoft Word 97, Word 2000 and so on), which is an expensive ongoing process.

DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS AND PRACTICAL SKILLS COURSES

Overall the interventions studied had good knowledge and awareness of the kinds of soft skills and practical skills courses needed. The importance of these kinds of skills were highlighted by employers; the needs of employers in this area had to be emphasised to participants who did not understand the relevance of these kinds of courses.

QUOTE: We decided to take a snapshot of where they were when they came in, how they felt about certain things - could they do this, could they do the other. Then we let them do it when they finished the course so they could see the comparison. It was like a self-assessment. Part of the confidence building was what

do others think of you, so they would do it with their family, their partner, their children, parents, whatever, so they had other people's view of them, which was a bit frightening. That kind of soft skill development was very successful.

Staff member of a training project for women returners, UK

The range of soft skills covered was quite similar across different projects. Common were: communication skills, confidence building, personal development, and teamwork. In Italy, where two projects targeted immigrants, the soft skills training concentrated on how to communicate across different cultures and languages.

The practical skills offered by the projects included: how to conduct a job search; how to search for jobs on the Internet; how to write letters of application for employment; how to succeed in a job interview and mock interviews, creating CVs, customer services, and health and safety.

In Spain one project that focused on telemarketing showed participants how to use tools such as online chat - including how this could be used with deaf people - and developed practical skills such as email etiquette. Another project in Spain involved a simulation of the working environment with training occurring over the Internet.

Soft skills and practical skills are generic but the courses need to be tailored to the specific target group.

CHOOSING TRAINERS

Disadvantaged people need a particular model of training that recognises their special needs. A key element of the pathway approach is that the interaction of participation is sensitive and attuned to the needs of learners. Trainers must have the capacity for this kind of interaction.

Having the right trainers for ICT skills certifications was vital for the projects studied. The fieldwork highlighted that although technical knowledge of ICT was essential for trainers, it was arguably the least important skill needed.

QUOTE: You are probably dealing with people who have been out of education a long time and have not got a number of skills. It is more than just coming in delivering the course and off you go. You have to relate to these people, I felt that on some of the aspects .. some of the trainers didn't have that. When we started this course [none] of us [knew] a thing about computers, most of us could not turn a computer on, so we were very very basic. Because we were out of the educational ring we had not

got a lot of confidence. Our confidence was down and our motivation would not have been the best. It's not just the course you have to know you also have to instil a certain amount of confidence in the persons. When I look back it must have been hard for that trainer to get through to a lot of us.

Former participant of a project for the long-term unemployed, Ireland

Key skills needed by ICT skills trainers were: communication skills, the ability to empathise with and be sensitive to the target group, having an understanding of the cultural context of the target group, and teaching skills. Trainers for people with some physical disabilities also needed to have specialised knowledge of the adaptations required for comfortable ICT learning environments for them.

Trainers for soft skills and practical skills were a different set of trainers and also needed to have formal qualifications where relevant in their fields. Similar to ICT skills trainers, they needed good communication skills and empathy with the target group. Cultural sensitivity was seen as more important for these trainers because of the more personal nature of the courses.

DELIVERING SKILLS TRAINING

Interventions for delivering training in ICT skills, soft skills and practical skills shared many common features. Having small class sizes were best for ensuring that trainers were able to spend more time to give personal supports to each participant. Small class sizes were, however, expensive and training delivery organisations were under pressure to have larger classes.

Ensuring a positive learning environment was also a common feature of the different kinds of skills training, as was the need for trainers to empathise with the participants and be aware of cultural contexts.

Practical, hands-on experience and role playing methods were particularly successful as training delivery methods for disadvantaged groups. Practical elements were vital for ensuring that ICT training for skills certifications could be used in everyday work settings.

One difference between ICT training on the one hand and soft skills and practical skills training on the other hand was that the latter often needed to be tailored to the specific target group. Delivery approaches for soft skills training were often highly specific as well because of the more personal nature of this training.

QUOTE: There are some important questions when you are talking about a disabled person trying to get a job. One question which took several days of discussion was should I tell at the first stage of application that I am disabled or should I not tell it until the interview, and how it should be done. What I say it this sounds like a small thing but it is not. When you are training to do a CV this question comes up. So just doing a CV and giving it time is very important and should be part of any project that is to do with activating disabled people.

Former participant of a project for people with disabilities, Finland

There were a wide range of examples from the fieldwork of using ICT for training delivery although few were particularly innovative. The overall approach was to focus on face-to-face delivery methods. Where ICT was used for training delivery, the best approach was using it in practical situations that could be related to a work context.

The fieldwork highlighted that having an ICT training solution available did not necessarily mean that it would be useful and relevant for the target group. The most relevant example was a UK project that tried a distance learning solution for women returners and found it was unsuccessful because the women wanted to get out of their homes for training, not stay inside. However working women were more interested in distance learning methods.

Ensuring support for social and cultural needs

Socially disadvantaged individuals do not usually have the financial resources to participate in training interventions. Individuals experiencing disadvantage also have many social and cultural support needs as training participants. Interventions had to recognise these obstacles and provide support to enable engagement.

Interventions also had to consider whether cultural and other forms of diversity were acknowledged and respected and that all participants were empowered to become active citizens through understanding their values, legitimising prior knowledge and skills, providing information on citizens rights and increasing their capacity to participate in decision-making.

ENSURING FINANCIAL AND CHILDCARE SUPPORTS

Financial supports such as training allowances, travel allowances and childcare supports are costly, which underlines the need for strong policy that recognise the needs for these kinds of supports. Ensuring low cost training can be a particular challenge for professional IT certifications which are costly to deliver and support.

QUOTE: For a start you can't expect women to go through these courses without giving them the resources they need right away. One of the big things we didn't have was a computer. Women doing this [training] at this level need a computer at home, even the lend of one for the duration of the course, with maybe an option to buy at a reduced rate at the end if they complete successfully. Also the software - they need up-to-date software. It's very hard for a woman to get out of the house at night to study, especially if you are a single parent, but if you have the resources there you can learn after the kids go to bed.

Former participant of a project for women, the UK

Ensuring childcare supports was a particular challenge to projects. In Finland the state provides a good level of childcare support. The lack of affordable childcare was a restraint to participation in training interventions in the other four countries studied.

Many former participants experienced restraints to progression in employment because of childcare constraints, suggesting that more sustainable options should be explored with participants at the intervention stage that can be carried through to employment. One of the difficulties raised is that jobs in IT sector industries may not be well-paying until the second or third year of employment and until that time women with childcare duties working in the IT sector may not be able to afford to pay for childcare.

ENSURING LEARNER SUPPORT AND BUILDING PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Building peer support networks during the intervention stage was highlighted as particularly valuable for ICT training interventions. Peer support networks were created and supported both during training interventions and afterwards, when the support centred on sharing employment information.

QUOTE: One [project] has participants who are very familiar with ICT; they worked in large computer companies [before they became ill]. They are on disability pension but they still have their knowledge and experience and they are a big resource for the [project] members, both the staff and students. They are teaching, supporting and helping people taking ECDL. This is very effective peer support because they have the skills and also have experience of having mental health problems.

Staff member of a project for people with mental health problems, Finland

It was clear from the fieldwork that peer networks needed to be "kick-started" by the training projects. Using tutors to facilitate peer support was widely mentioned in all the countries studied. Tutors also played a role in facilitating peer support once the training came to an end. In such situations tutors gave encouragement and support to peer groups and encouraged individuals to communicate with one another after the end of the training.

The Internet was mentioned as a valuable tool for maintaining peer support networks in all the countries studied except Italy. A successful strategy was to form groups of individuals to research topics over the Internet.

ENSURING CULTURAL SUPPORT IN CULTURALLY-DIVERSE PROJECTS

Ensuring cultural support was an important part of training interventions with participants representing a mix of cultural backgrounds. Where training projects had a cultural support policy, participants often felt secure and respected.

The main method used by the interventions studied was flexible teaching models, consisting of adapting the structure of the training project to meet the cultural needs of participants. Flexible teaching models involved creating small classes so that tutor support could be individualised.

A second method was cultural induction sessions usually delivered prior to the start of the ICT training course. Participants and staff were given a code of practice to facilitate the running of a culturally mixed training intervention.

QUOTE: During the inductions we do reinforce our equal opportunities and respect for other traditions and nationalities. Everyone signs a form to verify that they have received the induction. We do not allow any wearing of football tops, particularly Celtic and Rangers or other stuff that would display allegiance to a particular nationality or tradition. This year we have different students who are from ethnic minorities. We did monitor them to make sure that they didn't get hassled. The monitoring was really just in the form of getting the staff to be vigilant and just checking out with them about how they were getting on and there didn't seem to be any problems.

Staff member of a project for unemployed people, UK

A third approach was cultural awareness training, structured in the form of one-day events and organised on a number of occasions throughout the training period to raise awareness among participants and staff of the cultural and ethnic practices of all participants.

ICT were used in various ways to raise cultural awareness. Irish projects used video media conferencing with projects abroad. Italian projects organised cultural exhibits on the web, building rapport between the project and diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Participants used the Internet and email in all the countries studied to keep in contact with friends and past participants living in other countries, and to a lesser extent to research other cultures.

PROVIDING CITIZENSHIP INFORMATION

Providing citizenship information was a weak aspect of the interventions studied. This refers to informing participants of their employment and trade union rights and legal and regulatory issues related to working with ICT. There are good possibilities for making this information available on the Internet.

*QUOTE: One of the courses we offer is for immigrants and it shows them basic ideas about labour contracts, employee rights, how the labour market functions in Spain and in this region, etc. This pilot course has a teacher, materials for the teacher and for the student, and will begin very soon.
(translation)*

Staff member of a project for women returners and unemployed women, Spain

In particular, a need was identified for more formal documentation on employment rights. This was particularly relevant for ICT sector employment which has a low level of trade union involvement. There may be few ways for disadvantaged groups to otherwise come in contact with this kind of information.

Although many projects did not provide adequate citizenship information, many did give participants the research skills to access such information on the Internet.

SUPPORTING DECISION-MAKING

Where projects actively encouraged decision making, individual participants felt a sense of empowerment. In such projects, participants were actively encouraged to plan their training and set employment goals for themselves.

Supporting decision-making was highlighted as particularly important for participants who became entrepreneurs. Interventions aimed at entrepreneurship in the IT field should consider tutors experienced in business who could assist decision-making for at the start-up phase.

The most advanced project for decision-making by participants was found in Finland and was based on a model of cooperation and communication among staff and participants and shared decision-making processes.

QUOTE: The [project] is democratic in so far as decisions are discussed together but the final responsibility is on the [project] director. You can't pass the responsibility of what is happening in the [project] on to people who have severe mental health problems; it is too heavy for them and would not work. In this model the members and staff members have meetings all the time because it is also teaching and supporting the use of skills such as co-operation and communication to help make decisions and express yourself. It teaches people to be able to disagree with things and have the power to express your opinion. All the decisions are made in house meetings in which all the members take part, where you go through what is happening at the [project] etc. Also these members take part in the administration, they are also board members. We make the important decisions about staff and the budget etc. They are involved in every sector of running the organisation. This way these people are quite empowered and involved in every aspect. You cannot do the [project] without the members.
Staff member project for people with mental health problems, Finland

Providing employment and career guidance services

It was noted earlier that ICT sector employment is fast moving, with new skills sets emerging as quickly as new applications and processes are developed. Career paths change quickly in information society employment as new opportunities emerge. In this context, providing employment and career guidance services is a key element of the pathway approach.

Employment and career guidance services for disadvantaged people need to be delivered in a client-friendly and flexible manner, provide good quality information on local employment opportunities and education and training opportunities, be accessible and be able to support progression and career development.

QUOTE: My guidance was great because I knew what I wanted to do but I just didn't know how to go about it. They told me exactly what I needed to do and what to do to get that. So when I said I wanted to be an IT tutor I didn't know how to get from A to B. They told me what training I needed to do and once that training was done, they told me the guidance I needed on how to go and find employment.

Former participant of a project for disadvantaged youth, Ireland

The importance of providing employment services and career guidance services - were well-recognised by projects across the countries studied but the delivery of these aspects was uneven, suggesting better strategies are needed in these areas.

A key finding for career guidance was the need for qualified and resourced staff who are knowledgeable about careers using ICT skills and in ICT sectors. Career guidance can be out-sourced but projects do not always have the resources for this option. When developed in-house, there is the danger that it will be haphazard, with career information being delivered to participants by staff who are not always well-informed or trained in guidance work.

The fieldwork highlighted that ICT tools - particularly Web-based information - are particularly useful for both career guidance and providing information on local employment opportunities and further training opportunities. However information on ICT careers and employment opportunities that is fixed on CDs becomes outdated very quickly.

Many projects trained participants to search for career and employment information on the web and this was highlighted as a good way for participants to develop Internet skills. On the other hand, much web-based information is out of date or irrelevant to the local situation - suggesting that it is important that trained staff guide such efforts to ensure that the best information reaches the participants. The fieldwork also highlighted the need for participants to have Internet access after the project ended to continue to search for jobs on the Web.

Developing employment progression measures

Employment progression measures are necessary to secure the transition of women and men experiencing disadvantage into sustainable employment. These interventions seek to secure the actual movement into employment and to support participants therein.

ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS

The weakest element of the pathway approach in the projects studied was engaging with employers. This was acknowledged as vital across all the countries studied but there were few examples of projects doing this successfully or using innovative means to accomplish this.

QUOTE: As far as employment, we talked a lot about call centres and the kind of jobs they could expect to find in a call centre. We built relationships with some of the local call centres and took them out, showed them around and they got careers information at that point. Then some of the call centres came back later on and talked to them

further about it and any upcoming opportunities within their call centres. We also had good relationships with employment agencies in this area because a lot of call centres recruit via agencies, and we would ask an agency to come in and talk about the opportunities that they had. Then they would carry out live interviews on our premises for each of the candidates, so people would come in in their best gear, have a real interview and be offered jobs on the day in some cases. One of the agencies was given the green light to recruit from [our organisation] directly to [name of company] call centre.

Staff member from project for unemployed women, UK

Networking approaches with local employers and local job centres were highlighted as a way forward. Some projects invited personnel from local job centres and from local industry to give advice to participants, conduct mock interviews and advertise any available positions.

This led to strong relationships being formed between training projects and local employers or job centres. These relationships allowed local firms to become familiar with the type of training being delivered in these projects and thus they used the projects as a source of recruitment. An alternative approach was where projects brought participants on class visits to local ICT firms to give them a feel for the industry.

In some cases there were obvious gaps between the jobs available locally and the types of interventions offered by projects. The fieldwork highlighted a considerable need for more focused strategies by interventions aimed at particular types of employment and also interventions that would encourage flexible employment opportunities in the ICT sector.

Employers were blamed by some project staff for not taking enough interest in the disadvantaged target groups. This finding highlights the importance of measures to improve corporate social responsibility in future pathway models. Projects in Finland were more aware of the need to focus on corporate social responsibility measures; for example one project raised the awareness of employers of the opportunities for employing people with disabilities.

PROVIDING WORK PLACEMENTS

Work placements were vital to interventions that provided higher-level professional ICT skills certifications and an important part of other training interventions. Employers looking for ICT skills certifications wanted new employees to be able to use the skills in practical situations right away.

QUOTE: For some time we have had a policy of assistance to disadvantaged groups, and we have agreements with various job training centres so that their students can do placement work with us and thus help them to find jobs. The experience has been very positive. The lesson that I have learned from this is that the placements are necessary for job training... Placement is essential and should be encouraged, because it's the best way of bringing the unemployed into contact with the labour market. (translation)

Employer of former participant of a project for women returners and unemployed women, Spain

Planning work placements was an area that continued to challenge many projects across all the countries studied. For projects delivering IT skills certification training, arranging the specific placement that would benefit trainees was difficult and very time-consuming. Staff, participants and employers with work placement experience generally agreed that there needed to be more contact between the projects and the employers to discuss the specific needs of the trainee and the employer. This contact time was limited by the resources available. This area needs a much more strategic approach by future projects.

SUPPORTING BUSINESS START-UPS AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Supporting business start-ups and self-employment was another area that needs strengthening. The fieldwork highlighted the insecure and stressful nature of self-employment, particularly contract work, in the IT field. Women were found to be particularly vulnerable in IT-related contract work. Stronger measures are needed to support and develop entrepreneur skills. One UK project was offering flexible micro-units for women wishing to start their own business. This type of support needs to be developed and encouraged.

QUOTE: In our vision of moving from where we are to becoming a women's technology centre is that within that centre we would offer flexible micro units for women who were trying to get themselves set up in business. They could rent them by the week or month or whatever in a supportive environment with a view to rent in more commercial premises if they are successful. A woman could even just rent space on a Wednesday afternoon because they don't want to be stuck at home all week. That social aspect is very important. Perhaps that's why women don't go into self-employment, because they don't like working in an isolated environment.

Staff member of training project for women returners, UK

SUPPORTING TELEWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

The fieldwork studied only a few projects that offered telework-related interventions and the findings were not positive regarding moving disadvantaged groups immediately into teleworking after completing a training intervention. The fieldwork suggested that discrimination by employers might be an element here.

QUOTE: The original idea was that people would work totally from home and that way they could forge their own career or make their own hours. We just felt that the more we went into the course, the less and less this was a possibility. Employers were seriously reluctant to send any work out, be it accounts or paperwork or even typing up simple letters. There was just, I think, this impression of the little woman sitting at the table and the kids yapping around the feet. We just found that it simply didn't work. So people were not going to earn a decent living working from home.

Staff member of a project for people with disabilities, Ireland

PROVIDING SUPPORTED AND TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Some people experiencing disadvantage will never be able to work in regular employment and will need supported employment. Awareness of possibilities in this area was particularly strong in Finland.

One strategy described was for people with disabilities, whereby a group made up of several or a number of people works together to complete tasks. In one project the local "clubhouse" chooses a member to work in a particular job, often IT outsourcing work; the employer is guaranteed that if that person needs to take time off work, someone else will complete the task.

MENTORING FORMER PARTICIPANTS IN EMPLOYMENT

Another area the fieldwork highlighted as weak across all countries was mentoring former participants in employment. There was agreement that mentoring was helpful particularly for women returners and new entrepreneurs in the IT field but again, few projects were doing this successfully. The main reasons cited for this was lack of funding for this kind of work.

The former participants interviewed raised many issues and concerns about their employment situation that could have been improved with stronger mentoring mechanisms by the projects. A key example was the difficulty experienced by many participants in continuing to upgrade

their ICT skills in employment. Other restraints to progression in employment that could have been eased by strong mentoring processes included childcare difficulties and experiences of discrimination at work, particularly by women; the IT employment area is well known to be male-oriented. Participants from other disadvantaged groups also spoke of their experiences of discrimination in employment.

Using ICT would seem to have obvious potential benefit for mentoring by projects. However none of the projects were using ICT tools specifically designed for mentoring. Many were using email. The one project using video conferencing did not give a positive assessment of its use for mentoring disadvantaged groups. This suggests that ICT mentoring tools is an area for further experimentation and research development.

QUOTE: The mentors used video conferencing. But [participants] would have something to say and they wouldn't say it - they'd wait to tell someone the next day or whatever. Maybe that's a symptom of educational disadvantage. Maybe if it was someone assertive they would use it but that's actually what the problem was.
Staff member of a project for disadvantaged youth, Ireland

TRACKING PROGRESSION IN EMPLOYMENT

Tracking progression in employment was also a very weak element of the interventions studied. There was no systematic tracking of employment outcomes by any of the projects studied.

Project staff overall showed considerable resistance to tracking former participants, even though they were aware that tracking is important to evaluate the outcomes of the interventions. There were no examples found of innovative ICT tools and processes used for tracking. Email was used in an informal way by many project staff to keep in touch with former participants, suggesting that email-based systems might offer some promise.

QUOTE: We are dealing with a lot of information that is very sensitive and we have to be very careful with that information. We have it and we share it in the meetings and I tell every migrant that we have this meeting and we try and support you to go further and is that is OK. And they always say yes. For example we have the health centre and every migrant will go to the health centre and there is only one person whom they deal with and who checks them completely. Nobody else has access to those files except us. It is very secure. We never take minutes at the meetings. This way it stays in the hands of living people about other living people. If it were to go on the Net even in a secure way I don't think it would be nice.

Staff member of a project for migrant workers, ethnic minorities and refugees, Finland

For both mentoring and tracking there was a strong belief that face-to-face methods of communication were more important than online methods. This suggests that a research area for exploration is the extent to which ICT communication tools can enhance communications between disadvantaged groups and employment interventions.

Summary and discussion

This study investigated the appropriateness of a model of good practice – the pathway approach – to integrating disadvantaged people into employment in the information society. As described earlier in this Chapter, three key questions were given particular consideration:

- > Is a pathway approach relevant in the context of the information society?
- > If yes, are there specific factors that need to be taken on board when implementing a pathway approach in the context of the information society?
- > Are there culturally specific issues that differentiate a pathway approach across different Member States?

Our findings in relation to each of these are discussed below.

Is a pathway approach relevant in the context of the information society?

The fieldwork demonstrated clearly that a pathway approach does have relevance for the information society and is an appropriate model for moving disadvantaged people into employment in the information society. While our fieldwork indicated some unevenness across different projects in relation to the main elements of the pathway approach and some weaknesses, the overall applicability of the approach was confirmed.

One area of weakness, which was referred to a number of times in the foregoing discussion, is the lack of linkage to employers. This is an area of weakness in pathway approaches generally, but in relation to the information society, it is a particularly important area to address.

Employment in the information society may be even more difficult for disadvantaged people to access than jobs in more conventional sectors. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, information on the types and variety of career options available in the information society is not readily available to disadvantaged people. Secondly, and following on from the above, there can be a misperception that employment in the information society necessarily involves very advanced levels of training and education. Finally, ongoing technological developments within the

sector has meant that career paths and opportunities can change and develop much more quickly than in other sectors.

For all these reasons, developing adequate linkages between training interventions and local employers in the sector is vitally important for a pathway approach in the information society. Failure to do so may mean that disadvantaged people cannot even consider training for employment in the sector. But it can also mean, as the fieldwork demonstrated, that training interventions themselves can become outdated and irrelevant, through failing to keep pace of industrial change.

In the context of greater policy focus on corporate social responsibility, particularly in relation to social and economic policy, there is clearly scope to address this issue.

A second key finding of our fieldwork in relation to the relevance of a pathway approach in the information society concerns the different types of skills development that must occur. The conventional pathway model emphasises the provision of practical skills and soft skills alongside the more vocational content of training. The study shows clearly that this is also an important feature of interventions to prepare disadvantaged people for employment in the information society.

It is important to stress this, as the necessity for ICT training may overshadow the perceived requirement for the parallel provision of soft and practical skills. It is particularly important to generate awareness of this issue in the context of the ongoing review of the European Employment Guidelines and the implementation of eEurope policy, which focuses on ICT training only.

Are there specific factors that need to be taken on board when implementing a pathway approach in the context of the information society?

While the pathway approach overall has been shown to be appropriate to the information society, our fieldwork has also clearly shown that this approach needs to be modified in the context of the information society. There are a number of features specific to the information society that render it a more challenging arena for disadvantaged people and the interventions designed for them, than other more conventional sectors.

Thus our fieldwork identified sector specific issues in relation to all interventions within the pathway approach: from overcoming lack of awareness at the outreach stage, right through to monitoring progression in a fast changing sector. These sectoral specific factors have implications for implementing a pathway approach in the information society, but they also have

implications for the development of strategic linkages between training interventions and the industry itself.

The next chapter presents guidelines for using a pathway approach to address these factors.

Are there culturally specific issues that differentiate a pathway approach across different Member States?

This study examined EMPLOYMENT projects in five different Member States of the European Union. The most significant difference identified between the five countries was the number and proportion of EMPLOYMENT projects engaging with ICT. This ranged from over one-third in the UK and Finland to less than 10 percent in Ireland, Italy and Spain. This degree of variation can best be explained by the economic and social integration opportunities and priorities perceived in the mid-1990s when the EMPLOYMENT interventions were being developed in the various countries.

However, there was very little significant variation across the countries in the implementation of the pathway approach. In some instances, specific interventions within the overall approach were modified to better address local circumstances. For example, outreach mechanisms or the provision of cultural supports tended to be tailored to the specific target groups. Similarly, in some instances progression routes reflected the proximity of relevant potential employers.

Overall, however, while elements of the various interventions within the pathway approach showed some nuancing to the specific context, we can on the basis of the fieldwork identify a generic pathway approach, within which the logic and modus operandi appear consistent across a wide range of national contexts and local settings.

This generic model and the guidelines associated with it are discussed in the next chapter of this report.

Guidelines for a Pathway Approach for Information Society Interventions

A key lesson from the study is that ICT skills training is only one part of a broader set of interventions – a Pathway Approach – necessary for the transition of disadvantaged groups into sustainable employment in the information society. Chart 5 illustrates the five main interventions and their associated key information society factors.

Chart 5: Pathway approach and key information society factors

MAIN INTERVENTIONS OF A PATHWAY APPROACH	KEY INFORMATION SOCIETY FACTORS
<p>Contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups This intervention ensures that effective outreach mechanisms are in place and that the target groups are facilitated in every possible way to be aware of and receptive to opportunities.</p>	<p>The ‘distance’ of disadvantaged people from employment in the information society (reflected in lack of information about types of employment, misperceptions about level of skills required and concerns about undergoing ICT training) needs to be factored into outreach and motivating approaches and special steps taken to redress this.</p>
<p>Developing skills This intervention ensures quality training, ideally accredited, imparting relevant skills and, as far as possible, targeted at identified job opportunities. As necessary, this is accompanied by developing skills in areas such as literacy and communication.</p>	<p>Vocational training must be relevant to real industrial requirements and certification systems should reflect this. Vocational training must be accompanied by soft skills and practical skills.</p>
<p>Ensuring support for social and cultural needs This intervention ensures that cultural and other forms of diversity are acknowledged and respected and that all participants are empowered to become active citizens through understanding their values, legitimising prior knowledge and skills, providing information on citizens rights and increasing their capacity to participate in decision-making.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged people moving into employment in the information society have particular requirements relating to practical issues such as childcare, but also to broader issues such as ensuring their employment rights within the sector. The development and resourcing of peer support networks, in the context of both training and subsequent employment is an important dimension of providing social supports and can be facilitated by the Internet and related technologies.</p>

Chart 5 continued

MAIN INTERVENTIONS OF A PATHWAY APPROACH	KEY INFORMATION SOCIETY FACTORS
<p>Providing employment and career guidance services Employment and career guidance services for disadvantaged people must be delivered in a client-friendly and flexible manner, provide good quality information on local employment opportunities and education and training opportunities, be accessible and be able to support progression and career development.</p>	<p>Providing guidance on careers in the information society generally is challenging, given the speed of change within the sector. As part of a pathway approach for disadvantaged people, it is crucial that qualified and resourced guidance counsellors are available.</p>
<p>Developing employment progression measures This intervention seeks to secure the actual movement into employment and to support participants therein. Specific actions include regular assessment of progress, evaluating and recording learning outcomes, supporting personal planning, familiarisation with the local work culture, and supporting mentors and supervisors.</p>	<p>Ensuring progression to employment in the sector is an essential element of a pathway approach if integration is to be achieved: linkage to employers, work placement, mentoring in employment and monitoring of progress are all essential elements.</p>

This chapter outlines guidelines for using the five main interventions of the pathway approach in an information society context. The guidelines are for practitioners – those responsible for developing and implementing programmes for disadvantaged groups – and for policy-makers. Where appropriate, guidelines are also identified for researchers.

Guidelines for contacting and motivating disadvantaged groups

In the context of overcoming labour market disadvantage, appropriate outreach and motivating mechanisms are the first key step. This is even more important when employment in the information society is the goal, as disadvantaged people may see ICT-related employment as outside their reach and therefore not relevant to their employment aspirations. Over and above the more conventional requirements of outreach, therefore, in the context of the information society, it is important to address the distance, real or perceived, between those who experience disadvantage on the labour market and the opportunities available within new and emerging ICT sector employment.

For practitioners:

- > In providing information on ICT-related courses available, language should be kept simple and the use of jargon avoided.
- > Successful past participants who have made careers in the information society can be used to highlight the benefits of participation in training.
- > Community based open days involving IT taster sessions can help overcome fear of IT training environments.
- > Small group sessions, emphasising the creative and fun aspects of ICT and facilitated by supportive staff, can help allay fears about ICT and returning to education.
- > Conducting taster ICT training courses for potential participants in their own homes, or in their local communities, are particularly useful with people with low self-esteem.
- > Informal interviews with potential participants and basic IT tests are useful in demystifying new technologies and in assessing capabilities.

For policy-makers:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for contacting and motivating these groups to participate.

- > There is good potential for using the Internet to provide information on local ICT training opportunities, if at the same time Internet access is facilitated for disadvantaged groups, such as making accessible local public Internet access points available to disadvantaged groups.

For researchers:

- > The study identified a need for research into how Internet-based information on local ICT training opportunities can be made more accessible to disadvantaged groups.

Guidelines for developing skills

The fast changing nature of the information society and the technological developments within it lends particular urgency to the need for adequate technical training for disadvantaged people hoping to access employment. Technical skills and certifications need to be attuned to the employment opportunities available locally and the needs of employers.

However, the need to combine vocational or technical training with training in both practical skills and soft skills is one of the clearest lessons emerging from this study. The provision of practical and soft skill training must address the circumstances of participants and their lack of familiarity with real work environments in the information society.

For practitioners:

- > It is important that the transmission of technical skills can accommodate progression routes for participants, both within training and within employment.
- > Appropriate certification can help ensure these progression routes, but challenges arise in regard to (a) ensuring that employers will recognise certification awarded, (b) ensuring that national systems of accreditation are compatible with industry standards and (c) finding mechanisms to ensure that training provision keeps abreast of industry developments.

- > It is important therefore to ensure that local employers recognise and value the ICT skills certification provided by training interventions and that these are targeted at the needs of local employers.
- > Where professional ICT certifications are provided, a careful choice is necessary between the range of industry certifications and national qualifications. For both, it is important to ensure that training and certifications are responsive to the needs and developments within the industry.
- > Training delivery methods are important for disadvantaged groups: the choice of trainers is crucial in providing an empathetic training environment and practical, hands on experience and role playing methods are valuable approaches.
- > Trainers of technical, soft and practical skills, in addition to teaching skills, need to have good communication skills, the ability to empathise with and be sensitive to the target groups, understand the cultural context of the target group.
- > ICT training should concentrate on face-to-face delivery and personal contact and support. Where ICT is used to deliver training, the focus should be on practical work uses and be task oriented. Examples of this are using the Internet for research and job searching.
- > While a range of ICT applications can be used for particular training interventions, some solutions may not be suitable for certain groups: for example women returners may prefer to leave their homes for training rather than avail of distance learning.
- > Small community based organisations, which can play an important role in reaching out to and engaging the target groups, may not have the necessary IT infrastructure to deliver training interventions. Strategic partnerships at local level could help ensure co-operation between relevant actors.
- > Practical and soft skills required by participants include communication skills, confidence building, personal development, teamwork, job search, writing letters of application, mock interviews and developing CVs.
- > The provision of practical and soft skills should also seek to improve participants' ability to deal with discrimination in ICT sector employment.
- > Skills training should also be mindful of the entrepreneurial opportunities that exist and should seek to develop skills in this area.

- > Participants need to be made aware of employers' needs in relation to soft skills and practical skills and that these skills are just as necessary as ICT skills to ensure sustainable employment in the information society.

For policy-makers:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for development of skills: not only ICT skills but also soft skills and practical skills.
- > Programmes need to use appropriate certification to help ensure employment progression routes for disadvantaged groups. Parallel policy approaches are needed to ensure that (a) employers will recognise the certification awarded, and (b) national systems of accreditation are compatible with industry standards.
- > The study was inconclusive regarding the potential of e-learning aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups; policy approaches for these groups should not focus on e-learning in preference to other training delivery methods.

For researchers:

- > The study identified a need for further research into the potential of e-learning (specifically, distance learning) aimed at employment in the information society for disadvantaged groups.
- > The study identified a need for further research into ICT skills certification progression routes for employment for disadvantaged groups, focusing in particular on industry certifications that may be recognised across the Member States.

Guidelines for providing cultural and social support

Providing cultural support ensures that cultural and other forms of diversity are acknowledged and respected and that all participants are empowered to become active citizens. Social supports are necessary to overcome financial and other practical barriers to participation in training and in employment.

Disadvantaged people moving into employment in the information society have particular requirements relating to practical issues such as childcare, but also to broader issues such as ensuring their employment rights within the sector. The development and resourcing of peer support networks, in the context of both training and subsequent employment is an important dimension of providing social supports and can be facilitated by the Internet and related technologies.

For practitioners:

- > The costs associated with providing cultural support and more particularly with providing social supports must be factored into training interventions. Childcare costs and transport costs are just two of the potential barriers to participation that disadvantaged people face.
- > It is important to develop peer-support networks that can be maintained after training. Such networks allow former participants to share experiences and strategies for dealing with discrimination in IT sector employment and further ICT skills training in employment.
- > There is good potential to use Internet for peer-support networks; this highlights the need to ensure that Internet skills are developed during the intervention and Internet access is assured afterwards.
- > There is good potential for using ICT tools for information on cultural integration and multiculturalism and for using Web-based information generally for citizenship information; however this information needs to be updated regularly to remain useful.
- > The provision of information on employer and employee rights and more generally on employment rights is particularly relevant as much of the ICT sector does not have trade union representation and participants may not otherwise have access to this information.

- > The provision of information on corporate social responsibility in the context of local employment, particularly on the need for more flexible and part-time employment opportunities in the ICT sector, is a valuable dimension.

For policy-makers:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for providing cultural support and social supports such as childcare and transport costs.
- > There is good potential to use the Internet for peer-support networks that can assist sustainable employment outcomes; again this highlights the need for policies to ensure that accessible local public Internet access points are made available to disadvantaged groups.

For researchers:

- > The study identified that childcare supports and needs are important aspects of interventions for sustainable employment in the information society for disadvantaged groups; however no ICT-related tools or solutions were identified in the fieldwork. Further research could focus on how ICT could be used to meet the childcare needs of disadvantaged groups both in training and in employment.

Guidelines for providing employment and career guidance services

Again here, it is worth referring to the distance between many disadvantaged groups and the information society as a potential sector of employment. Lack of information on the variety of careers and opportunities available in the sector can inhibit people's aspirations. In this context, it is important that employment and career guidance services are provided and are delivered by qualified and resourced staff who are knowledgeable about ICT-based careers.

Overall, this study found that employment and career guidance services need to be delivered in a client-friendly and flexible manner, provide good quality information on local employment opportunities and on education and training opportunities, be accessible and be able to support progression and career development.

For practitioners:

- > Provide information to participants on discrimination that may be experienced by employees in the IT sector, and particularly by women.
- > Provide up-to-date information on specific ICT skills training progression paths for ICT sector occupations.
- > For interventions delivering industry ICT certifications, participants need to be aware of the ongoing cost of taking new exams and keeping up the certification in employment.
- > Practical information is needed on salaries and progression in ICT employment that would allow people with child care responsibilities (usually women) to make practical choices about whether they can afford to work or how best to combine work with childcare responsibilities.
- > Provide information on local flexible and part-time employment opportunities in ICT fields.
- > There are good possibilities for making this information available on the Internet as an integral part of a training intervention. It is vital that this material is updated regularly. Participants can use the Web to find employment and career information but they will need to be guided as the information may be outdated and not related to local needs.

For policy-makers:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for employment and career guidance services, provided and delivered by qualified and resourced staff who are knowledgeable about ICT-based careers.
- > There is good potential for using the Internet to provide information on local employment and career opportunities related to specific ICT skills; again, however for information aimed at disadvantaged groups it is necessary to ensure that accessible local public Internet access points are made available to these groups.

For researchers:

- > The study identified a need for further research into how Internet-based information on local ICT employment and career opportunities can be made more accessible to disadvantaged groups.

Guidelines for developing employment progression measures

Employment progression measures are necessary to ensure that disadvantaged people actually do make a successful transition from training to employment. Again this is an area where engagement with employers could play a crucial part.

However, the study has shown that this is the weakest element of the pathway approach among the projects studied, although there was a high level of awareness of the potential value of such engagement. In particular, there was a striking difference between the clear strategies that projects had developed and used to contact and motivate disadvantaged groups to engage with an intervention, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the lack of strategies that projects had developed to contact and motivate employers to engage.

For practitioners:

- > Programmes will need to make a focused and pro-active research effort into the skills needs of local employers – for ICT skills and soft skills. This research process may be a good way to engage with and build stronger links with employers.
- > Strategies for work placements should be developed that involve closer contact between the employer and project to ensure placements are tailored for specific ICT skills certifications.
- > Networking with local employers and local job centres can also serve to forge stronger relationships between training interventions and the industry. Networking allows local firms to become familiar with the type of training provided and to consider these projects as a source of recruitment.

The study highlighted the fact that both mentoring and tracking progression in employment were a very weak element in the interventions. Three approaches are suggested:

- > Develop strategies for increasing staff awareness of the need for mentoring in ICT sector employment.
- > Develop strategies for overcoming staff resistance to tracking interventions, especially using ICT tools for tracking.
- > Develop strategies for increasing awareness among staff of tracking measures as a research tool.

For policy-makers:

- > Programmes aimed at employment for disadvantaged groups in the information society will need specific resources for employment progression measures: particularly engaging with employers, providing work placements related to ICT skills qualifications, and mentoring and tracking former participants in employment.
- > The study clearly supported ongoing efforts to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures into employment and social policy and information society policy. In particular, ongoing efforts are needed by employers to ensure that disadvantaged groups do not face restraints and barriers in their attempts to acquire further ICT training and skills certifications in employment. CSR measures are also need to ensure ICT work placements for disadvantaged groups.
- > The European Commission has recognised that evaluation of the effectiveness of measures to integrate disadvantaged persons into the labour market is severely hampered by a lack of statistical data. This study underlined that ongoing tracking of former participants of interventions will be necessary to ensure effective evaluation of these programmes in an information society context.

For researchers:

- > The study identified a need for research into how corporate social responsibility can be encouraged to increase the progression of disadvantaged groups in information society employment.
- > The study identified a need for further research into ICT mentoring and tracking tools, particularly those based on email.
- > The study identified a need for further research into the potential of teleworking as an employment option for disadvantaged groups.

Links to further information

Researchers, practitioners and policy-makers are invited to highlight on the web their work and projects related to employment, social disadvantage, and the information society. To facilitate networking, a website of projects in Europe and wider internationally is being developed.

The Inclusion, ICT and Employment Network

www.ite-network.org

Listed below are web URL links to the latest versions of the main policy and strategy documents discussed in the first chapter of the report.

The new Employment Action Plans developed by all the Member States should be available online by early Autumn 2003. Similarly, new National Action Plans Against Poverty and Social Exclusion from each of the Member States should be available online by Autumn 2003. These new national plans will outline the latest policy at Member State level related to the issues raised in this report.

European Employment Strategy

europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/newees_en.htm

Employment Guidelines

europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/guidelines_en.htm

National Employment Action plans by Member States

europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/national_en.htm

EU Information Society policy: eEurope

europa.eu.int/information_society/europe/index_en.htm

National Action Plans Against Poverty and Social Exclusion

europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/jun/napsincl2001_en.html

The ESDIS High-Level group

europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/knowledge_society/esdis_en.htm