

## Euro-parliamentarians welcome mainstreaming initiative by Equal projects

A delegation of projects - funded by ESF/ Equal (DG EMPL) - from Germany, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands spoke to Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the 26th of October 2005.

The “Alliance” -a transnational cooperation network comprising four EQUAL-development partnerships with focus on migrants and asylum-seekers from three countries- visited the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg. Goal of the visit was a discussion with parliamentarian in preparation of the planned mainstreaming-conference in September 2007 in Brussels.

### *Different colours of the political spectrum...*

Meeting four parliamentarians from three parliamentary groups, the aim was to discuss dissemination and mainstreaming activities, to include parliamentarians in this endeavour and to offer combined expertise within the network to the members of the EP.



The Europarlement in Strasbourg in full colors

The delegation, led by Mr. Frans Bastiaens from the Netherlands and Dr. Hermann Schoenmeier from Germany, informed the parliamentarians about their efforts to gather best and bad practises and discussed issues in regard to migration and asylum.

Topics mentioned were the double-faced problem of integration and re-integration, the methods and approaches used in some of the projects in dealing with the target

group and general issues of migration policy and its challenges in the coming years. Some bottlenecks mentioned were the block on the use of Structural Fund money outside the Eurozone and difficulties in combining funding from the DG's Development, Justice and Home Affairs and Employment. Also National differences in the Equal programmes were under debate

### *European interest in Equal initiatives*

All parliamentarians voiced their interest in the matter and emphasized different points. For Maria MARTENS (EPP-ED-NL), rapporteur on the committee on development, the question of coherence of activities within the EU-framework was of high importance. She asked the delegation to report examples where efforts and funds are used ineffectively because of lack of coherence between EU-institutions and/or between the EU and national authorities. Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS (ALDE-D), who volunteered to co-host the conference in 2007, stressed that the quality of discussion in migration is not up to the standard one should expect and asked for a “fresh start”, especially in view of the demographic and economic problems at

hand. He emphasized the connection between demography and the ability of a society to be innovative.

In the afternoon Jo LEINEN (PES-D) remarked that even if not directly involved with migration policies, it is impossible to avoid the issue. He supported the idea to prepare an article about migration-issues for the newsletter of his fraction. Finally, Jeanine HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT (ALDE-NL) lent her support to the conference and offered to host the event. She stressed the fact that by 2007 it will be only three years until the



Miss HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT questioned by Mr Bastiaens (left) and Dr Schoenmeier

supposed to have common migration procedures in place and asked for the input of the network on upcoming EP-documents dealing with the first Directorates on this topic.

### *Next Steps*

All parliamentarians asked the delegation to stay in touch as much as possible and to make sure that the connection will be maintained and strengthened. The delegation received a variety of useful hints and suggestions in how to contact other key actors within the EU-institutions and promised support in mustering an adequate audience for the proposed conference. The delegation decided to renew old and establish new contacts with the European Parliament on a regular, quarterly basis and drew a very positive and enthusiastic conclusion about the proceedings of the day. In the follow-up, contacts with EC officials, regional meetings with MEP e.g. in the Saarland and in Limburg/ Brabant and further internal network-meetings to build on the basis of what has been established in Strasbourg will take place..