


CRITERIA FOR EQUASS EXCELLENCE (SSGI)(2012)



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Introduction

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an initiative of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR). EQUASS provides comprehensive services in the area of development, promotion, approval and certification of quality, all of which comply with the European requirements¹ for quality in the provision of Social Services. EQUASS aims to enhance the social service sector by engaging service providers in quality and continuous improvement, and by guaranteeing service-users quality of services throughout Europe. EQUASS wants to contribute to the creation of a European market and the modernization of social services of general interest where service providers can distinguish themselves and use the quality of their service provision as a competitive advantage.

The Quality Excellence in Social Services (EQUASS Excellence) is a certification program for identifying best practice in social services². It enables organisations which provide services in the social sector to engage in an external certification process at a European level by which they prove their status as best practice service providers to the person served and (or) other stakeholders.

This document presents the criteria for Excellence of the European Quality for Social Services, based on the Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (CQF for SSGI) (The European Platform for Rehabilitation, November 2010) and the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (VEQF for SSGI) of the Social Protection Committee (Social Protection Committee, October 2010). The EQUASS Excellence recognises excellent performance on the EQUASS Principles for Quality, the Common Quality Framework for SSGI and its core criteria for quality Excellence and the requirements set in Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest. It also assures performance on an operational Quality Management System which is one of the basic enrolment criteria for certification with the EQUASS Excellence.

¹ Position Paper on Quality (High Level Group on Disability, September 2007); The Voluntary Quality Framework for Social Service of General Interest (SPC, October 2010) and the Common Quality Framework for Social Service of General Interest (EPR, November 2010)

² For definition see: Commission Communication "Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment", COM(2007) 725 final, 20.11.2007.

EQUASS Excellence characteristics

Certification by EQUASS Excellence is characterised by:

1. 50 criteria for EQUASS Excellence
2. The criteria for EQUASS Excellence are based on the ten EQUASS Principles for Quality, the CFQ for SSGI and the VEQF for SSGI. The criteria will be assessed on systematic approach, full deployment and tangible results over the last three years (=trends).
3. The EQUASS Excellence assures performance on essential elements³ of Quality Management Systems (QMS)
4. The self-evaluation and the internal audit are based on a written report which reflects the performance of the organisation on the EQUASS Excellence criteria on approach, deployment and results. For demonstrating the results the applicant reports on the performance of 2 relevant performance indicators for each criteria over the last 3 years (=trends) and how these results are compared with results of other social service providers.
5. The organisation should have a policy on all Quality principle which should be described in an annex to the self-evaluation report. The policies are considered as enrolment criteria for an EQUASS Excellence Certification audit.
6. The external audit will be carried out based on the self-evaluation document. The auditors will confirm the performance on the EQUASS Excellence criteria by documentation review and interviews during the site visit.

EQUASS Excellence is customised for the social sector and offers a comprehensive approach based on quality criteria, self-evaluation, internal audit and external audit procedures. After sending the application form and the self-evaluation report, a site visit is carried out. During this site visit, two independent auditors verify the applicant's performance on the EQUASS Excellence criteria by reviewing documentation and conducting interviews with staff, people served by the organisation and other relevant stakeholders. The results are reported on in a written audit report. An organisation that meets the EQUASS Excellence criteria will be certified for a period of three years. The EQUASS Awarding Committee oversees the process.

³ The basic elements for quality management are: 1. Identifying customer needs and expectations; 2. Management of processes; 3. Management of responsibilities; 4. Management of resources; 5. Measurement and data analysis; 6. Customer satisfaction; 7. Systematic Quality Improvement system

Overview

Principles for quality		Dimensions	Criteria
1	Leadership	Mission, vision and quality policy	1 & 2
		Communication	3 & 4
		Annual planning	5 & 6
		Contribution to society	7 & 8
2	Staff	Managing Human Resources	9 & 10
		Qualification and Development of staff	11.&12
		Staff engagement	13 & 14
3	Rights	Rights and duties	15 & 16 & 17
		Self determination	18 & 19
4	Ethics	Policy on ethics	20 & 21 & 22 & 23 & 24
		Roles and responsibilities	25
5	Partnership	Partners in service delivery	26 & 27
6	Participation	Involvement of person served	28 & 29
		Empowerment of person served	30 & 31
7	Person Centred Approach	Identifying customer demands	32 & 33
		Individual planning	34 & 35
8	Comprehensiveness	Delivery process	36 & 37
		Continuing service delivery	38 & 39
		Holistic Approach	40 & 41
9	Result Orientation	Measuring results	42 & 43
		Evaluating results	44 & 45

		Reporting results	46 & 47
10	Continuous Improvement	Continuous improvement cycle	48 & 49
		Innovation	50

1. LEADERSHIP

EQUASS Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services demonstrate leadership within the social sector internally by good governance and within the wider community by promoting positive images, challenging low expectations, encouraging best practice, enabling more effective use of resources, inspiring innovation, and aiding the creation a more open and inclusive society.

The Principle of 'Leadership' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Mission, vision and quality policy**
 1. The social service provider defines documents and implements its vision and mission values on service provision.
 2. The social service provider defines, implements and reviews its quality policy by determining long term quality goals, and its commitment to continuous improvement.
- **Communication**
 4. Persons served, family members and service user organisations are able to give feedback on their individual and collective experience of programmes and services.
 3. The social service provider informs all stakeholders about the offered programmes and services provided.
- **Annual Planning**
 5. The social service provider management establishes, implements and reviews an annual service planning and review process.
 6. The annual plan includes:
 - annual outcomes / targets
 - the activities to be undertaken in achieving the annual targets

- monitoring of the performance of the organisation in meeting its annual targets
 - time-scales and procedures for review and revision.
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- **Contribution to the society**
 7. The social service provider plans, demonstrates and reviews organisation's results in satisfying the needs and expectations of the society.
 8. The social service provider plans, demonstrates and reviews the organisation's commitment to social responsibility through activities contributing to the society.

2. STAFF

EQUASS Principle for Quality

Organisations providing social services lead and manage their personnel and their performance to achieve the organisations business objectives and the delivery of a person centred services. They are committed to the employment and promotion of qualified personnel based on required knowledge, skills and competences. They promote a culture of engagement, development and continuous learning of staff and professionals for the benefits of person served and other stakeholders. The organisation provides health, safety, well-being and appropriate working conditions of its personnel.

The Principle “Staff / professional’ should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Managing Human Resources**

9. The social service provider has a staff recruitment and retention policy that promotes the selection of qualified personnel based on required knowledge, skills and competences.

10. The social service provider operates and reviews its compliance with mandatory national legislation, providing appropriate working conditions, adequate and agreed staff levels and staff ratios, and appropriate rewarding for staff and volunteers.

- **Qualification and development of staff**

11. The social service trains all staff based on a plan for learning and development and evaluates the effectiveness of the training.

12. The social service provider plans, documents and reviews requirements for competence in the identified roles and functions of staff and evaluates them on an annual basis.

- **Staff engagement**

13. The social service provider recognises the staff as a resource for feedback on organisational performance, service development and staff development

14. The social service provider implements and reviews the methods (mechanism) to enhance staff motivation and satisfaction.

3. RIGHTS

EQUASS Principle for Quality

Organisations providing social services are committed to protecting and promoting the rights of the person served in terms of equal opportunities, equal treatment and freedom of choice, self-determination and equal participation. Organisations providing social services are ensuring informed consent and adopting non-discrimination and positive actions within their own services. This commitment is apparent in all elements of service development and delivery and in the values of the social service provider.

The Principle of 'Rights' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Rights and duties**

15. The social service provider assures the rights of persons served outlined in a Charter of Rights that is based on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe and other international human rights conventions, especially those elaborated under the United Nations.

16. The social service provider informs the person served about his/her rights and duties especially to equal treatment on grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation before receiving the services.

17. The social service provider has accessible complaint management system that registers feedback on performance from persons served, purchasers and other relevant stakeholders.

- **Self determination**

18. The social service provider respects and implements the fundamental right to self-determination of the person served. They freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

19. The social service provider facilitates the person served in choosing and having access to advocates and/or supporting persons.

4. ETHICS

EQUASS Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services operate on the basis of a Code of Ethics that respects the dignity of the persons served and their families or carer takers, protects them from undue risk, specifies the requirements for competence within the organisation of the social service provider, and promotes social justice.

The Principle of ‘Ethics’ should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Policy on ethics**

20. The social service provider defines, implements and reviews its policy on ethics that respects and assures the dignity of the persons served, protects them from undue risk and promotes social justice

21. The social service provider operates and reviews mechanisms that prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of the person served

22. The social service provider provides and reviews services in a safe system of working within a safe environment to ensure the physical security of persons served, their families and caretakers.

23. The social service provider defines, implements and evaluates a set of principles, values and procedures that govern behaviour in service delivery containing aspects of confidentiality, accuracy, privacy and integrity.

24. The social service provider defines, implements and evaluates procedures for assuring confidentiality of data regarding the persons served and the service provided to them.

- **Roles and responsibilities**

25. The social service provider defines, implements and reviews the roles and responsibilities, authorities and the interrelation of all personnel who manage, design, deliver, support and evaluate the service provision to person served.

5. PARTNERSHIP

EQUASS Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services operate in partnership with public and private sector agencies, employers' and workers' representatives, funders and purchasers, organisations of person served, local groups, families and carers to create a continuum of services and achieve more effective service impacts and a more open and inclusive society.

The Principle of 'Partnership' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Partners in service delivery**

26. The social service provider works in and evaluates its partnership with other organisations in the provision of services.

27. The social service provider works in and evaluates its partnership with persons served, purchasers and other stakeholders in the development of services.

6. PARTICIPATION

Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services promote the participation and inclusion of person served at all levels of the organisation and within the community. Social service providers involve service users as active members of the service team. In pursuit of more equal participation and inclusion, social service providers should facilitate the empowerment of the persons served. They work in consultation with representative bodies and groups to support advocacy, the removal of barriers, public education and active promotion of equal opportunities.

The Principle of 'Participation' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Involvement of the person served**

28. The social service provider includes persons served as active participants in service planning, have appraisal mechanisms of an on-going structured dialogue process in the management of the service, including the definition of the needs, the definition of the services, as well as of the evaluation of quality.

29. The social service provider institutes an annual evaluation of participation of persons served both on individual and/or group basis.

- **Empowerment of the person served**

30. The social service provider operates specific instruments to support the person served, improve their personal empowerment, their personal situation and that of their community.

31. The social service provider operates specific mechanisms for establishing an empowering environment.

7. PERSON CENTRED APPROACH

EQUASS Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services operate processes aiming at the improvement of quality of life of persons served that are driven by the needs of both the persons served and potential beneficiaries. They respect the individual's contribution by engaging them in self-assessment, service-user feedback and evaluation and that value personal as well as service goals taking into account the physical and social environment of the person served. All processes are subject to regular review.

The Principle of 'Person centred' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Identifying customer demands**

32. The social service provider selects and reviews programmes which are based on a needs assessment at the location which is most convenient for the person served, family and care givers

33. The social service provider offers programmes consistent with the identified needs of its customers and objectives for the programme.

- **Individual Planning**

34. The social service provider operates and reviews individual processes that are driven by the needs of the person served.

35. The social service provider implements and reviews the planning of services based on the identification of individual needs and expectations of persons served in an Individual Plan.

8. COMPREHENSIVENESS

EQUASS Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services ensure that the person served can access a continuum of holistic and community based services, which value the contribution of all persons served and potential partners including the local community, employers and other stakeholders and that span from early intervention to support and follow up. The services should be delivered through a multi -disciplinary team approach or multi -agency partnership with other service providers and employers.

The Principle of 'Comprehensiveness' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Delivery process**

36. The social service provider identifies, implements and reviews the key service delivery processes to the persons served in line with its vision, mission statement and quality policy.

37. The social service provider reviews this delivery process and maintains control over the quality of the delivery of the service.

- **Continuing service delivery**

38. The social service provider ensures that the person served can access a continuum of services that span from early intervention to support and follow up, responding to changing requirements over time.

39. The social service provider develops a seamless continuum of services and reduces barriers in a multi-disciplinary or multi-agency setting.

- **Holistic approach**

40. The social service provider operates services from a holistic approach based on the needs and expectations of the person served with the aim of improving the quality of life for the person served.

41. The social service provider monitors and supports staff performance to enhance the quality of life for the person served.

9. RESULT ORIENTATION

EQUASS Principle for Quality

Organisations providing social services are aiming for results, in terms of both how they are perceived, on achievements they have made and on the benefits they are providing to the persons served, their family members, carers, employers, other stakeholders and the general community. They also aspire to the achievement of best value for their purchasers and funders. Service impacts are measured, monitored, and are an important element of continuous improvement, transparency and accountability processes.

The Principle of 'Result orientation' should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Measuring results**

42. The social service provider identifies its business results and provides formal periodic and independent review and procedures to achieve the targeted results.

43. The social service provider identifies, registers and reviews the outcomes and benefits for person served of the receive services on individual and collective basis.

- **Evaluating results**

44. The social service provider evaluates its business results in order to determine best value for purchasers and funders (*'best value'* can also be expressed in relation to quality of life outcomes for the person served).

45. The social service provider evaluates the individual and collective satisfaction of persons served and other stakeholders by internal and/or external evaluation.

- **Reporting results**

46. The social service provider provides and reviews clear and accessible records on outcome, including personal perception and achievements.

47. The social service provider actively disseminates organisation performance among its staff, person served and external stakeholders.

10. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

EQUASS Principle for Quality:

Organisations providing social services are proactive in meeting market needs, using resources more effectively, developing and improving services and utilizing research and development to achieve innovation. They strive for effective communications and marketing, value ‘persons served’, funders’ and stakeholders’ feedback and operate systems of continuous quality improvement.

The Principle of ‘continuous improvement’ should be evidenced in its approach, deployment and results by the following criteria:

- **Continuous improvement cycle**

48. The social service provider defines, implements and reviews the organisations procedure for continuous improvement on the basis of an improvement cycle.

49 The social service provider identifies and reviews performance indicators for measuring the results of the improvement actions.

- **Innovation**

50. The service provider introduces, manages and reviews innovative ways of working that have been identified based on the needs of all stakeholders.