



# EQUASS Newsflash

Welcome to the new issue of the EQUASS Newsflash! This publication is an initiative of the European Quality in Social Services to provide you with regular updates regarding the most recent developments and achievements of the EQUASS System.

## Upcoming changes EQUASS-2012

Based on the Common Quality Framework for Social Service of General Interest (Prometheus project) and the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services of the Social Protection Committee, the EQUASS Awarding Committee of the European Quality Assurance of Social Services decided to adopt the new principles and quality criteria in its certification programme so all EQUASS certification programmes will comply with these quality Frameworks.

The EQUASS Secretariat and the EQUASS Core Group are now in the process of studying and implementing the consequences of this decision by including these new principles and criteria into the core documentation of the EQUASS certification programmes. On 17 May 2011, the EQUASS Awarding Committee will discuss and

decide on the new draft of the EQUASS Assurance and EQUASS Excellence certification programmes. The core documentation of the 'new' EQUASS Assurance 2012 will be available in June 2011. Stakeholders, social service providers, certified organisations, auditors and consultants will be informed about the upcoming changes in both certification programmes via the EQUASS Newsflash in July 2012.

All organisations applying for EQUASS certification before 31 December 2011 will be audited according to the current "standard". All organisations applying for EQUASS certification after 1 January 2012 will be audited according to the 'new' (EQUASS 2012) standard.

EQUASS is truly adapting to the changing demands of stakeholders and changing context in the rehabilitation and social sector.

## EQUASS Trainings Adopt a New Format



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. One of the measures which contribute to this mission are the auditor trainings (Excellence and Assurance) and the consultancy trainings regularly organised throughout the year.

In the past, the trainings lasted for two days; the feedback given by the participants was very positive, but showed that the length of the training was too short. Therefore, EQUASS decided to extend the number of training days so participants will be better prepared for their role as auditors and consultants. **All EQUASS auditor and consultant trainings will now last for three days .**

The auditor trainings will therefore offer more opportunities to exchange and to calibrate individual performances of potential auditors but also practical training session in writing the audit report, preparing the site visit and interview techniques. The consultancy training will pay more detailed attention to all phases of

implementation of the EQUASS Excellence and the EQUASS Assurance: self-evaluation process, writing an implementation plan, supporting the implementation process, internal auditing, organising test audits and reporting and preparing the final external audit.

### Upcoming EQUASS events

- **27 to 29 April 2011:** EQUASS Excellence Auditor Training, Lisbon (Portugal)
- **17 May 2011:** EQUASS Awarding Committee
- **23 & 24 May 2011:** EQUASS Auditor training in Tallinn (only on invitation; ESF-project)
- **27 to 29 June 2011:** EQUASS Assurance auditor training, Oslo (Norway)



## Meet Isabel, EQUASS Assurance auditor



The EQUASS system has experienced a tremendous surge of scope in the last couple of years, and is now well implemented in several European countries. This growth means that EQUASS is now relying on an ever-increasing pool of qualified auditors, from all over Europe. They have a very special insight into the EQUASS system, and **Isabel Silva**, a Portuguese auditor for EQUASS Assurance and Excellence, accepted to answer a few of our questions. Isabel has been a certified EQUASS auditor since 2009, and has successfully carried out several audits in Portugal.

### Since when have you been auditing for EQUASS?

Since 2009. First, in June, I attended the Excellence Auditor training and then, in November, I had the chance to be involved in an Excellence audit team, as co-auditor. Since then, I have been involved in more Excellence audits, as co-auditor as well as lead-auditor.

Since 2010, and after the Assurance Auditor training, I have been doing regular audits in the Assurance level, in Portugal.

### What do you like about it?

Having the opportunity to audit the EQUASS system in different organisations is always a valuable experience. In every audit we can know and learn the good practices that Social Services are doing.

Personally, during the audit process I like to get in contact with clients and staff and trying to understand how the organisation is managed, how the organisation is satisfying the needs of all stakeholders and how is it complying with the Equass principles.

### What made you decide to get familiar with the EQUASS system?

In 2009, the Portuguese government has promoted the "Arquimedes Project" with the

aim to finance consultancy projects in the Rehabilitation sector and help social rehabilitation organisations to implement a Quality Management System. The EQUASS system, as also the ISO system, was one of the QMS recommended and accepted. It was my first contact with EQUASS.

After that I looked for further information about EQUASS in the web and found the EPR site. The information available about the principles and criteria raised in me the interest to get a deeper understanding of the system.

In addition, I always had the interest in working with the quality systems in Social Services and in my professional activity as a consultant I was already having contact with social organisations. So I have found in EQUASS what I consider what Quality should be in all the social organisations that work to provide the best service to people with special needs. EQUASS has been the opportunity to further develop myself in a professional and personal way.

### What are some the challenges that you faced?

I must confess that the official language of EQUASS, the English, was my first challenge. But it was also an opportunity to improve my English languages skills

particularly the spoken language.

One other challenge that I can mention has to do with role of the auditor. We need to have the capacity to understand the context, the identity and the reality of each organisation. This is very important because it will help us to understand how the management system is implemented and therefore assess better the EQUASS criteria.

### Why would you recommend this system to social services providers?

I am sure that all social services, in all social sectors, have the purpose to provide the best service to their clients. And they have in EQUASS the tool to help them to achieve that purpose and to develop further their mission.

By implementing the EQUASS system and principles, the social services providers will have the opportunity to improve and systematize the management of the organisations and its services and focus, even more, in satisfying clients' needs and expectations. The EQUASS system will help them to achieve the continuous improvement and to implement the good governance practices, essential to their future sustainability.



## Brusseler Kreis event



On 23 March 2011, the Brusseler Kreis, EQUASS Local licence Holder in Germany, organised an evening for the German Members of Parliament and other key stakeholders in the Rehabilitation Sector. The event was organised at the National Representation of 'Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg' in Berlin.

Guus van Beek was invited to give a keynote speech on the European perspective of Quality in the Social Sector. He gave an overview of the current challenges the social sector is facing and the latest developments on Quality: the Common Quality Framework for SSGI (Prometheus, 2011) and the Voluntary European Quality Framework for SSGI (Social Protection Committee, 2011). He also stressed that the EQUASS certification programmes will be compliant with both frameworks.

### New EQUASS Assurance Certified Organisations

Nipro Nord Odal AS, Haugaland Industri AS, Torbjørnsbu Verksted AS, Centro de Bem-Estar Social de Arronches, Associação Portuguesa de Paralisia Cerebral de Faro, Associação Portuguesa de Pais e Amigos do Cidadão Deficiente Mental de Coimbra, MAPADI, Bodø Industri AS, OPT (Oslo Produksjon og tjenester) AS, Lyngsalpan Vekst AS, Associação de Paralisia Cerebral de Évora, CIRE - Centro de Integração e Reabilitação de Tomar, EXISTIR, UNIR - ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS DOENTES MENTAIS, FAMÍLIAS E AMIGOS DO ALGARVE, CERCÍ FLOR DA VIDA, Fundação Irene Rolo, ASMAL - Associação de Saúde Mental do Algarve, CERCIMARCO, C.R.L, Bodø Industri, APPACDM Portalegre, APC Viana do Castelo, Itas as, CPC Beja, APPACDM Elva, APPACDM de Castelo Branco, Centro de Recuperação e Integração de Abrantes (CRIA), CRIAL - Centro de Recuperação Infantil de Almeirim, CRIO - Centro de Recuperação Infantil Ouriense, AAPACDM - Associação Algarvia de Pais e Amigos de Crianças Diminuídas Mentais, Velle Utvikling AS, Signo Rycon AS, Løxa Utvikling AS, IFokus AS, CERCIPORTALEGRE, CERCIESTA, APPACDM Lisboa, CERCIMAC, CERCÍ Grandola, APPACDM Viana Castelo, MALMEQUERES, MariNor AS, Tana Arbeidsservice AS, Luster Arbeidssenter AS, Flyndra AS, CERE, CRIANCA DIFERENTE, A2000, CERCÍAG, CDJPII, Bodø Industri, APC Braga, APPACDM Evora, CERCICOA, CERCÍ Mira, APC Odemira, Amento as, CERCISIAGO, APPACDM Soure, APPACDM Fundao, CERCILEI, CERCÍAV, Øksnes ASVO as, APPACDM Vila Real, CERCÍGUI, CERCÍFAF, CERCÍ Espinho, CASA SANTA ISABEL, CERCÍ Beja, DI-Gruppen AS, APC Coimbra, CERCÍG, ASTA, CEERDL, ACIP, Jobbintro AS, Vågar produkter AS, Brisk Kompetansesenter AS, Meløy Arbeidstrengscenter AS, Eidskog ASVO, Kafe Munken AS, Krokane Nærtjenester AS, APC Lisboa, Antoniushaus Hochheim, APPACDM Mirandela, Norservice AS, Rjukanlys AS, UMP-CDSE, CRIT, CERCÍ Penela, APPACDM Viseu, Seljord Personal AS, ASCTE, NECI, Nordreisa ASVO AS, Einekavane AS, ISJD - CS São José, CERCÍDIANA, CERCÍ Lamas, CEERIA, Spekter Pluss AS, Kanja Nome AS, APPACDM Santarem, CERCÍVAR, CERCÍPOM, Os ASVO AS, Providor AS, Indre Sogn Asvo AS, CSBJ, VARIOS, Theotokos Foundation, APPACDM Covilha, ISJD-CSSJD, APPACDM Maia, APACI, APC Viseu, Hengitysliitto / Ammattiopisto Luovi / Aikuiskoulutus

## Three new organisations receive the EQUASS Excellence recognition

The EQUASS Excellence recognition has been set up to identify and to encourage excellence and best practice in the rehabilitation sector. Since January 2011, three organisations have received the EQUASS Excellence certificate:

☆ **University Rehabilitation Institute Republic of Slovenia**



Univerzitetni rehabilitacijski inštitut  
Republike Slovenije - Soča



fundação afid diferença

☆ **Fundação AFID**  
**Diferença,**  
**Portugal**



☆ **APPACDM de**  
**Vila Nova de Gaia -**  
**Associação**  
**Portuguesa de Pais**  
**e Amigos do**  
**Cidadão Deficiente**

**A few words from the University Rehabilitation Institute Republic of Slovenia (URI):**

*"URI's experiences with EQUASS Excellence are very positive, because the audit brought awareness on the EQUASS areas which should be improved in URI, and also on the areas where URI has achieved good results."*





## Estonian ESF project



### Stakeholder information event

The current ESF project aims to pilot the EQUASS Assurance system to seven rehabilitation service providers in Estonia. Moreover, the project intends to raise awareness on quality of rehabilitation services to a wider sample of sectoral stakeholders, and to build capacity for a further roll-out of EQUASS approach on quality throughout Estonia in case of a positive evaluation.

In the framework of awareness raising among stakeholders, the project organised an information event on 30 March 2011. Guus van Beek, EQUASS Key expert, informed representatives of the ministry of social affairs, funder organisations, user organisation and project pilots about the EQUASS Approach on quality and

latest developments at the European level. During that meeting the pilots presented the state of the play and the challenges they faced in the implementation of the EQUASS assurance criteria.

### Pilot meeting

EQUASS does not only measure and certify quality, but it also offers a framework for benchmarking and quality improvement. At the meeting 31 March 2011, the project pilots exchanged their experiences and the results of implementing the EQUASS Assurance criteria. During very intense and interactive sessions the pilots site exchange information regarding possible answers and solutions in meeting the EQUASS Assurance criteria. This benchlearning experience has been greatly appreciated and has given all the pilots a unique opportunity to prepare themselves

on the first test audits which will be carried out in April 2011.

### Induction training for Local Licence Holder

On 1 April 2011, Guus van Beek discussed the role and responsibilities of the Local Licence Holder with Astangu Rehabilitation Center and a representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The training clarified not only role and responsibilities of the LLH but also the need for a national Stakeholder committee and the process of communication and certification.

At the meeting it was agreed that the project will inform the Ministry of Social Affairs about the process and results of the project in May 2011. (interim evaluation report) The information of evaluation is crucial for the Ministry to take decisions about a further roll-out of EQUASS approach on quality at the end of the project.

## EQUASS Core Group Meeting

The EQUASS Core Group met for a 1,5 day meeting in Brussels, Belgium on 6 and 7 April 2011.

The agenda was heavier than usual as it focused on getting everything ready for the big upcoming changes in the EQUASS Assurance system (EQUASS-2012). The participants also discussed the adaptations of the EQUASS Excellence system against the Common Quality Framework for SSGI, the EQUASS pricing system and the complaint procedures system. Time was also allocated to the question of quality control of the EQUASS auditors and of the relationship management with the current EQUASS Local Licence Holders.

As usual, the Core Group meeting fostered a lot of intense discussions, and resulted in a series of measures to be approved by the EQUASS Awarding Committee and the EQUASS Management Committee.



## VIS - Information Seminar



Veneto Investimenti Sociali is the result of a synergy between the experience of different companies who have joined forces and efforts. The company places itself on the local, regional and national market as a modern answer to complex needs, thanks to an entrepreneurial approach which is rooted in ethics and respect for the individual.

On 20 January 2011, VIS organised a information event on the EQUASS approach on quality for its shareholder organisations. Participants have been informed about the EQUASS approach on quality and the opportunities to prove their quality in providing social service via EQUASS certification.

The information event resulted in a contract between EQUASS/EPR and the Italian Automotive Academy for implementing EQUASS Assurance criteria.