



Enhancing performance, meeting needs

In social service provision



Why EQUASS?

EQUASS RESPONDS TO PROFOUND CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR IN EUROPE

Enhanced focus on a person-centered approach

requires that social services address in a timely and flexible manner the changing needs of each individual. The service should be driven by the needs of the users and aim at improving their quality of life as well as ensuring equal opportunities.

Stronger expectations for effectiveness and results

call for outcome measurement and a demonstration of the benefits of the service for the users and the community. International benchmarking and quality systems that take result-orientation into account become more important in this context.

The introduction of a market approach

encourages increased competition between social service providers in order to achieve transparency and efficiency. National authorities and funders will demand quality criteria in the service specifications in order to select the most appropriate service providers.

The creation of a European internal market

brings more intense cross-border service provision and calls for a quality recognition at European level, guaranteeing in an impartial way the quality for service users throughout the continent.

EQUASS MEETS THE EUROPEAN QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

Voluntary EQF for Social Services

EQUASS is fully compliant with the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services which was adopted by the Social Protection Committee in October 2010.

CQF for SSGI

EQUASS was reviewed in the light of the Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (December 2010) in which 50 major stakeholders from various social services sectors agreed on the different components and pre-conditions of quality. (Project ref: VP/2008/004 / CEN workshop 51).

"Feedback from clients and staff reassured us that we made the right choice to invest in EQUASS certification"

- Domingos Rosa, Director Foundation AFID, Portugal -

EQARF for VET

Meeting the EQUASS certification requirements means that the organisation has implemented the criteria and indicators of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET which was adopted by the European Parliament and the European Council on 18 June 2009.

The UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (December 2006)

is underpinned by a human rights approach which requires empowerment as a pre-condition for participation. EQUASS can help public authorities as well as sectorial stakeholders with the practical implementation of the UN Convention.

EQUASS ENHANCES THE PERFORMANCE OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

The set of recognised Principles for Quality and associate criteria

integrates the views of service users, service providers, social partners, funders and policy-makers. Its ultimate goal is the improvement of service provision and management systems.

The comprehensive self-assessment process

provides organisations with a template for both evaluating their current performance and identifying areas of improvement. EQUASS serves as a driver and compass for change and continuous improvement.

The formal certification and recognition

allows service providers to distinguish themselves in the market while being in line with national legislative requirements.

The benchmarking framework and platform

offers organisations that achieve EQUASS certification the opportunity to work together with like-minded organisations to achieve better outcomes and processes.

"We discovered that the contents and process of EQUASS are even more valuable than the certification itself"

- Mare Noolen, AS Welfare Services, Estonia -

What is EQUASS?

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an integrated sector-specific quality certification system that certifies compliance of social services with European quality principles and criteria. EQUASS aims to enhance the social sector by engaging service providers in quality and continuous improvement and by guaranteeing service users quality of services throughout Europe.

THE PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY AS THE OVERALL EQUASS FRAMEWORK

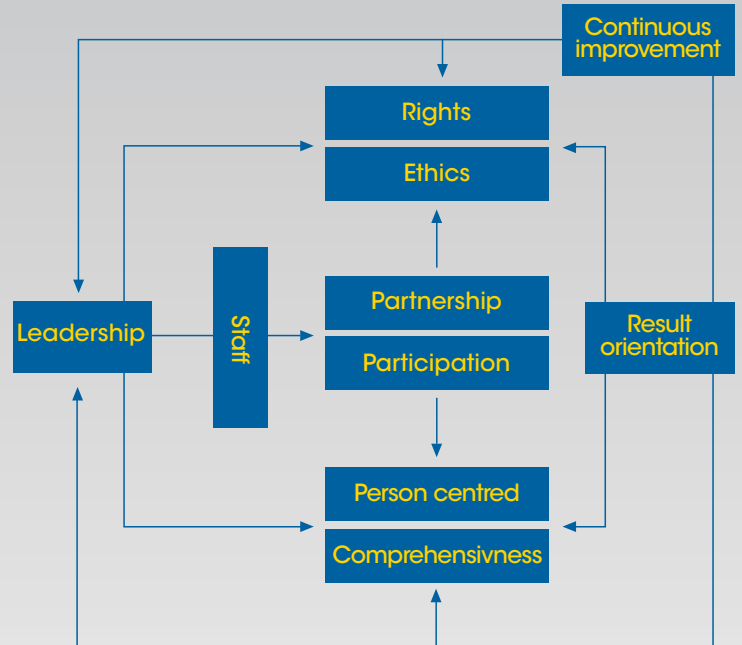
A European quality system for social services has to respond to legal, socio-economic and cultural differences in the different EU member states. Therefore EQUASS certification is based on universal principles - key values - rather than on a prescriptive set of standards.

EQUASS CERTIFICATION PROGRAMMES

EQUASS certification offers impartial and formal recognition of meeting the European quality requirements. EQUASS Assurance and EQUASS Excellence are based on the same Principles for Quality, with EQUASS Assurance being a stepping stone towards achieving the EQUASS Excellence level.

This value-based approach ensures compatibility and complementarity of the EQUASS certification scheme with existing national quality systems. Through national systems these values can be translated into national criteria and indicators, and adapted to the national context.

EQUASS Quality Principles



Assurance
in Social Services

Quality Assurance in Social Services (EQUASS Assurance)

EQUASS Assurance guarantees quality of service provision by certifying compliance with 50 criteria based on the ten Principles for Quality. It can be viewed as a fundamental requirement for operating social services, having a feasible threshold in terms of costs, efforts and resources required. An organisation that meets the EQUASS Assurance criteria is certified for a two year period. Excellence in Social Services (EQUASS Excellence)



Excellence
in Social Services

Excellence in Social Services (EQUASS Excellence)

EQUASS Excellence is awarded to any service provider that can demonstrate achievements and continuous improvement on all 50 criteria based on the ten Principles for Quality from three different perspectives: approach, deployment and results. The results of the certified organisations are published in order to help benchmarking and bench learning. An organisation that meets the EQUASS Excellence criteria is certified for a three year period.

"Every service provider in Europe should go for EQUASS: join now and be ahead of the game - or join later and be seen to lag behind."

- Susan Scott-Parker, Employers' Forum on Disability, UK -

"A vital element in EQUASS is the multi-perspective approach. This means that the Principles for Quality reflect the interests of a wide range of stakeholders."

- Mr Frank Flannery, Chairman EQUASS Awarding Committee -

How does EQUASS work?

EQUASS PROCESS

EQUASS certification uses well-defined criteria for both certification levels and works with specific procedures for self-evaluation and external audits. Based on the Principles for Quality, organisations must carry out an internal audit in the form of a self-evaluation followed by scoring and verification by external independent auditors. The performance on the EQUASS criteria for certification and the identified areas for improvement are reported to the applicant and to a European Awarding Committee. The Committee decides if an applicant will be awarded with EQUASS certification.

EQUASS AWARDING COMMITTEE

All processes are supervised by the European Awarding Committee. The Committee includes many of the key European stakeholders in the sector such as service users, social partners, service providers, policymakers and funders.

- Council of Europe
- Employer's Forum on Disability
- European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities
- European Disability Forum
- European Network of Social Authorities
- European Platform for Rehabilitation
- European Social Insurance Platform
- European Federation of Older People
- RI Europe

QUALIFIED AUDITORS

EQUASS Auditors have been trained and certified by EQUASS to efficiently carry out the assessment of performance against the Quality Principles of EQUASS Assurance and EQUASS Excellence. Our certification of Auditors is based on a credits system, with a combination of training sessions, practical exercises, shadow audits under the supervision of an experienced Auditor, and a regular practice of independent audits.

"A European quality system for social services has to build on the needs of the users and their right to participate in the development, management and delivery of the service. EQUASS certification is based on these principles. Its person-centered approach is a step in the right direction for the delivery of quality services to persons with disabilities."

- Erzsébet Földesi, Vice-President of the European Disability Forum -

LOCAL LICENCE HOLDERS:

In Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia, EQUASS Assurance certification services can be obtained through the Local Licence Holders listed below. The Licence Holder serves as a local intermediary between the EQUASS customer and the EQUASS Secretariat who coordinates the certification process between applicants and auditors.

The EQUASS Secretariat in no way outsources or delegates to the Local Licence Holder the decision on awarding the Quality Mark

For EQUASS Assurance certification in countries other than those listed below, for EQUASS Excellence certification in all of Europe, or for any other enquiries, please contact the Secretariat.

Estonia - EQUASS Eesti

www.equass.ee

Germany - EQUASS Deutschland

www.equass.de

Lithuania - Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (VRC)

www.reabilitacija.lt/en/

Norway - EQUASS Norge

www.equass.no

Portugal - APQ (Associação Portuguesa para a Qualidade)

www.apq.pt

Slovenia - URI Development unit of Employment Rehabilitation:

http://www.ir-rs.si/sl/Razvojni_center_za_poklicno_rehabilitacijo/

WHO ARE THE EQUASS CUSTOMERS?

EQUASS customers range from public to private and from profit to not-for-profit social service providers. The common characteristic among EQUASS applicants is their orientation towards results and continuous improvement. These organisations aspire to recognition and cooperation on a European level.



For more information on EQUASS services please contact:

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