

## Frequently Asked Questions



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**1. Who actually owns EQUASS?**

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an initiative of European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) with the support of the Council of Europe, the European Disability Forum (EDF), the European Association of Service Providers (EASPD), the European Employers and Trade Union Organisations, Rehabilitation International and European Social Insurance Institutes. EQUASS aims to enhance the personal services 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 personal services of general interest where service providers can distinguish themselves and use the quality of their service provision as a competitive advantage. EQUASS is owned by the European Platform for Rehabilitation.

## **2. Why do we need another Quality Mark when there are well-recognized international quality systems?**

Looking at the existing quality systems at international level that may be applicable for the Social sector, EQUASS has taken the challenge of setting a framework for Social services that are really user centred. The existing QM systems seem to be either too general for the Social sector or they strive for assurance in quality performance by offering minimum standards for performance.

## **3. What is the added value for organisation pursuing the EQUASS Excellence?**

EQUASS Excellence identifies Excellence and Best Practice in the Social sector, based on the same ten core principles of Quality as EQUASS Assurance. Those organisations that have been recognised and awarded by the EQUASS Excellence (previously called EQRM) can be considered as 'Centres of Excellence'. This mark of Excellence may contribute to a more competitive advantage, a high profile position in the sector, international recognition of best practices and attractive partner in national and international cooperation.

## **4. Why wouldn't a certification system based on a set of agreed standards have more impact?**

EQUASS Certification stands for a comprehensive approach in identifying quality, excellence and best practice in the social sector. The multi-perspective approach is one of the main characteristics of the EQUASS system. A conceptual framework of nine Principles for Quality is the basis of this system. The system is characterised as non-prescriptive and therefore it respects the European cultural variety in the social services practice. EQUASS Excellence organisation emphasises and facilitates learning by promoting self-evaluation, external audit and benchmarking.

## **5. How representative are the views of the members of the Awarding Committee?**

The EQUASS Awarding committee represents the key stakeholders at European Level of the social sector.

As of 2012, the EQUASS Awarding Committee members are:

Frank Flannery - European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) European  
Franz Terwey and Wolfgang Schulz-Weidner - Social Insurance Platform  
(ESIP)

Luk Zelderloo European Association for Service Providers for Persons  
with Disabilities (EASPD)

Thorsten Afflerbach - Council of Europe (CoE)

Catherine Grinyer - Employers' Forum on Disability

Jan Johansen - Rehabilitation International (RI Europe)

Dirk Jarré - European Federation of Older People (EURAG)

Erzsébet Szöllösi and Simona Giarratano - European Disability Forum  
(EDF)

Johan Lindstrom - European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA)

The EQUASS Awarding Committee meets once to twice a year. The Principles for Quality will be reviewed by the EQUASS Awarding Committee every five years. EQUASS Certification programmes system is reviewed every three years.

## **6. What is the function of the principles in the EQUASS Certification?**

The Principles for Quality are designed to provide a framework within which organisations can evaluate their performance and plan developments. The core process links organisational leadership with service enhancers (partnership and participation) and results orientation, feeding into a continuous improvement process. This process is guided by two principles that reflect an individual focus (rights and ethics) and two principles that specify the desired service focus (person centred and comprehensiveness).

## **7. Why can't an organisation simply do the Quick Scan and then get the Mark?**

Self-reflection on performance, which is one of the key processes of the EQUASS system, is the first step in the process of certification by the

European Quality in Social Services. During the EQUASS Programme the organisation will learn how to evaluate and to diagnose their performance with the Principles for Quality as reference framework. The 'Quick Scan' is a tool for self-reflection. The result of this diagnosis will be a profile of the organisation's current performance based on the criteria of the EQUASS Assurance or EQUASS Excellence. This profile will be transferred into an implementation plan.

Certification by EQUASS requires external audit by independent and qualified auditors. The auditors report the findings of the audit to the Awarding Committee which will decide if the applicant meets the requirements of the Mark. The external audit and the decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee are crucial for the credibility of the Mark.

#### **8. If the Awarding Committee does not know the applicant organisations, how can they award the Quality Mark?**

The awarding of the applicant by the EQUASS Awarding Committee is based on a written audit report which is made up by the EQUASS lead auditor. In this audit report the information is given on how the audit has taken place and information about the results concerning the performance of the applicant in relation to the EQUASS criteria, the applicant's strengths and areas for improvement. The EQUASS Awarding Committee has strict procedures and criteria for awarding the EQUASS Certification. The Awarding Committee awards an applicant if the applicant meets the awarding criteria.

#### **9. How does my organisation apply for EQUASS?**

Two documents have been drafted for your convenience:

- "How to Apply for EQUASS Assurance" is available for download in the EQUASS Assurance main page of our website.
- "How to Apply for EQUASS Excellence" is available for download in the EQUASS Excellence main page of our website.