Im Auftrag des Brüsseler Kreises

Brüsseler Kreis e.V.
Geschäftsstelle
Daniel Kiesel
c/o Stiftung Liebenau
Siggenweilerstraße 11
88074 Meckenbeuren
E-Mail: daniel.kiesel[at]bruesseler-kreis.de

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QUALITY APPROACHES IN SOCIAL SERVICES

AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

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Preview

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the current quality approaches of different actors at the European level in the policy influencing process of the social services. The paper will provide answers to two basic questions:

1. Who are the key European actors in the policy making process on quality in the social sector and what are their approaches on quality?
2. What are other relevant international approaches exist on quality, which have been applied, in the social sector?

The identified key actors in the process of policy making and standard setting in the area of social services are:

1. The European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs)
2. Social Protection Committee (SPC)
3. The Council of Europe (CE)
4. The High Level Group on Disability (HGLD)
5. The European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working Conditions
6. The European Organisation for Health and Living Conditions (EOHLC)
7. The European Platform for Social NGO's (Social Platform)
8. EU NGOs in the disability sector:
    a. The European Association of Service providers to People with a Disability (EASPD)
    b. The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)
    c. The European Union for Supported Employment (EUSE)
    d. Inclusion Europe (IE)
9. Other EU NGOs:
    a. The European Federation of service providers to home people. (FEANTSA)
    b. The Federal Association of non-statutory Welfare (BAGFW)

Other international quality approaches, which could be applied in the social sector, are:

1. Business Excellence (EFQM)
2. Common Quality Framework for Social Authorities (CAF)
3. ISO 9000
4. Eqalin

Introduction

Social Services of General Interest are subject to intensive demand for quality and effectiveness (European Commission, 2006). All the European Member States have embarked upon modernisation of their social services. The common challenge is to tackle the tensions between universality, quality and financial sustainability. (European Commission, 2006) At European level there is no mandatory standard for Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) but the developments in 2010 in the social sector lead to a European approach and a European Framework for quality in the social sector. (Social Protection Committee, October 2010) A major pre-condition for quality in the social sector is access to these services, which means that the services are affordable, available, and accessible. (High Level Group on Disability, 2007) Therefore, the quality of services should be a question of combining the choice of the individual user, and availability and affordability of services with some basic quality guarantees.

The European Commission set out its vision on quality by identifying objectives and principles of the organization of social services in particular, the importance of users' and stakeholders' involvement in the establishment, performance and evaluation of social services and the integrated provision of social services to reflect the multiplicity of user needs. (European Commission, 2007)

This document will describe the current developments on quality in the social sector and give an overview on communalities and differences in different quality approaches that contribute to the development of a Common Quality Framework (CQF) and the core criteria for quality assurance in Social Services of General Interest (SSGI).

**1*. The European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs)*

All the EU Member States started the process of modernization in their social services to tackle the tensions between universality, quality and financial sustainability. Although social services are organised very differently in the Member States, certain general aspects of this modernisation process can be seen:

1. The organization of Social Services of General Interest are decentralized to a local or a regional level.
2. The tasks of the public sector will be outsourced to the private sector. Public authorities becoming regulators, guardians of regulated competition and effective organization at the national, local or regional level.
3. Public-private partnerships and the use of other forms of funding are complementary to regular public funding.
4. Benchmarking methods, quality assurance, and the involvement of users in administration are introduced.

This heightened competitive environment and taking into account the specific needs of each person, creates a climate favourable to a "social economy", characterised by the importance of not-for-profit providers, who are yet faced with the need to be effective and transparent.

The Commission initiated in April 2006 a broad consultation with the Member States, service providers and users to better understand the nature of Social Services of General Interest across the EU.

The European Commission presents an open list of characteristics reflecting the specific nature of social services as services of general interest (European Commission, 2007). The European Commission also identified a number of more operational principles guiding social services. (European Commission, 2007) The specific nature, aims, characteristics and principles could be considered as quality characteristics and quality requirements for Social Service of General Interest.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 1.

2. The Social Protection Committee

The voluntary European Quality Framework (EQF) aims to develop a common understanding on the quality of social services within the EU by identifying quality principles that these services should fulfil. Moreover, by proposing a set of methodological guidelines, the Quality Framework will also help public authorities in charge of organising and financing social services, to develop at the appropriate level, specific tools for the definition, measurement and evaluation of social services' quality. Therefore, the framework intends to serve as a reference for defining, assuring, evaluating and improving the quality of these services.

The implementation of the EQF is voluntary. The framework reflects the consensus within the Social Protection Committee following the Council conclusions of 8 June 2009 which invited the Member States and the European Commission to "continue the work within the Social Protection Committee on ..... a voluntary Quality Framework for social services". (Social Protection Committee 2010) The EQF is flexible enough to be applied to the national,

regional and local context in all the EU Member States and to a variety of social services. It aims to be compatible and complementary with existing national quality approaches in the sector.

The voluntary European Quality Framework has been inspired by various initiatives concerning the quality of social services' : (i) the frameworks and tools which have been put in place by public authorities in the Member States; (ii) the initiatives already launched by the EU stakeholders; (iii) the Active Inclusion initiative; (iv) the results of eight projects financed by PROGRESS on the quality of social services; (v) the position paper issued in November 2007 by the Disability High Level Group providing guidance on how to promote quality of social services addressing the particular needs of people with disabilities.

This voluntary EU Quality Framework refers in particular to essential services provided directly to the person. Very often, these services, which are embedded in the social welfare systems of the EU Member States, are considered by the public authorities in the EU Member States as being of general interest and subject to specific public service requirements. Examples of social services are social assistance services, long-term care, childcare, employment and training services, personal assistants and social housing.

The EQF presents overarching quality principles for social service provision as well as quality principles on the following dimensions of service provision: the relationships between service providers and users, the relationships between service providers, public authorities and other stakeholders and human and physical capital. For each of the quality principles concerning the dimensions of service provision, operational criteria, which might be of help for the monitoring and evaluation of social services' quality, have been identified. The quality principles express commonly shared values and aims to develop a common understanding of the quality of social services, as well as to facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices. They are addressed to the public authorities in charge, often at regional or local level, of developing, organising, financing and providing social services. They are also addressed to service providers in so far as they concern the delivery of social services and to users, for whom they represent an important source of information about the quality of social services they can expect. These principles are also directly relevant for workers and employers of the sector.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 2.

3. The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (founded in 1949) seeks to develop throughout Europe, common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals.

The Council of Europe aims:

1. to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law
2. to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity
3. to find common solutions to the challenges facing European society: such as discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance, bioethics and cloning,

terrorism, trafficking in human beings, organised crime and corruption, cybercrime, violence against children;
4. to consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

Social service systems in the Council of Europe member states are not all equally developed, but they all face similar challenges. The ultimate aim is to make high-quality, comprehensive social services available to everyone in all the member states. Over the last years, one of the key developments in the provision of social services has been to make them more client-oriented. Social welfare services have to be adapted to their individual needs. One of the most effective ways to improve the quality of services is to involve users in their design, management, implementation and evaluation. User involvement also improves their autonomy and increases their participation in society as a whole. An intergovernmental Group of Specialists on User Involvement in Social Services (CS-US) was set up to examine the best practices of participation and involvement of users in social services throughout the European continent and integrated delivery of social services. The group devised a report and policy guidelines on user involvement in social services.

The primary task of the Directorate General of Social Cohesion (DG III) is to foster social cohesion and to improve the quality of life in Europe for the genuine enjoyment of fundamental human rights and the respect of human dignity. The Directorate is promoting European standards in the social and health field, the support of ethnic and cultural diversity, and the implementation of social development co-operation. The Directorate also seeks to give practical support to policy makers, professionals and field workers across Europe through its legal standard-setting instruments, ministerial conferences, intergovernmental committees and groups of experts who meet regularly.

In 1997 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation for the development and implementation of Quality Improvement Systems (QIS) in health care. (Council of Europe, 1997) In the explanatory memorandum the dimensions of quality improvement systems, general principles and condition for implementation and evaluation have been described. The Council of Europe adopted a resolution (RESAP (2001)3) about full citizenship of persons with disabilities through inclusive new technologies. (Council of Europe, 2001) In this resolution a number of instruments have been identified for instance: User involvement and standardisation have been identified as instruments to implement the resolution.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 3.

4. The High Level Group on Disability

The High Level Group on Disability, made up of representatives of all the Members States under the Commission presidency, has drawn up a document on the "Quality of the Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)" from the viewpoint of disability. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and inspiration on how to promote quality in social services, addressing the particular needs of people with disabilities. It is addressed in particular to actors active in the areas of social protection and social inclusion, including the Member States. (High Level Group on Disability, 2007)

The considerations in the High Level Group on Disability follow the principle of mainstreaming, which can be defined as the systematic consideration of the specific needs of people with disabilities when designing social inclusion and social protection policies. (……) The European Disability Action Plan 2006-2007 has been established as a priority in the promotion of access to quality support and care services, considering that: "promoting quality, affordable and accessible social services and support to disabled people through consolidated social protection and inclusion provisions will be at the core of EU mainstreaming actions…. Quality aspects of disability-related social services will also be explored, including the need to promote coordinated delivery of services". (European Commission, 2005)

The High Level Group on Disability explored in particular how relevant quality aspects of disability-related social services can be taken into account including the need to coordinate the delivery of services. A major pre-condition for quality of social services is access to these services. Accessibility to social services by people with disabilities means that those services are affordable, available, and accessible. (High Level Group on Disability, 2007)

In the document 'Quality of Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)' 'the High Level Group on Disability agreed on a number of basic principles. The HLGD emphases that quality of social services to people with disabilities is a condition for people with disabilities to lead full and independent lives, to reach their full potential as individuals, to contribute to and participate in society'. (High Level Group on Disability, 2007) When implementing fundamental rights of people with disabilities, basic principles for SSGI in the field of disability are:

1. Natural observance of human rights and freedoms outlined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
2. All services to people with disabilities should be characterised by an individual perspective, taking into account equality between man and women;
3. Choice, freedom of choice, informed choice and self-determination are vital.

When considering the issue of quality of social services to people with disabilities, the HLGD emphases the necessity of combining security with flexibility, as well as to ensure compatibility among the competences of the Member States with the ones at European level. A Quality Framework at EU level, based on a Total Quality Management approach starting from rights, values and principles would provide such an understanding. This European Quality Framework could be implemented through national quality systems. European quality systems should enable service providers in countries where disability services are less developed, to enter the system and engage in a quality approach that takes them to the appropriate level of quality. The HLGD identified 7 key principles and core criteria for quality assurance.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 4.

5. The European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working Conditions

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is an autonomous body of the European Union, created to assist in the formulation of future policy on social and work-related matters. The organization did a European Quality of Life survey in 2003 and 2007. The reports describes the comparisons between countries as well as between demographic, social and economic groups, the report documents material conditions, employment situations, living and working conditions, family and community life, health and housing in the 28 countries. The report looks at the views of Europe's citizens on these conditions, their subjective well-being and their assessments of the society in which they live. The report provides a unique insight into Europeans' quality of life today and it will be a useful contribution towards shaping the policies which seek to improve living and working conditions throughout Europe.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 5.

6. European Platform of Social NGOs

The European Platform of Social NGOs emphasis that quality in social services calls for a holistic approach based on a supportive economic and legal environment and a bottom-up participatory approach to quality. According to the European Platform of Social NGOs, social and health services are an essential part of the European social model, based on a universal social protection system and solidarity. In `Quality in Social and Health Services, Social NGOs recommendations to EU decisions makers´, the European Social NGOs set out the key preconditions necessary for quality services to develop across the EU as well as nine golden principles to ensure quality in the delivery of social and health services . This document has been drafted together with European networks of services providers and service users (i.e. EASPD, EDF, SOLIDAR, Red Cross EU office, EAPN, HOPE, AGE, Inclusion Europe, MHE, EURAG, FEANTSA, Eurodiaconia, CECOHAS, EPR). In the document the members of the European Platform of Social NGOs expressed their commitment to nine golden quality principles for social and health services of general interest. These nine principles must all be adhered to in service provision. For each principle a limited number of criteria have been identified. The criterion refers to the assurance of quality in the provision of Social Services of General Interest.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 6.

7. The European Association for Service Provider to People with a Disability (EASPD)

The European Association for Service Providers to People with a Disability (EASPD) stated in its memorandum for European Quality Principle Framework that the quality of the service should be linked to the Quality of Life (QOL) of the individual with a disability (EASPD, 2006). The memorandum emphasises the development of Quality Principles serving as guidelines in the service provision. Quality of services should be based on the concept of Quality of Life taking in consideration key values such as dignity, equal opportunities, independent living, full participation in and contribution to society. EASPD believes that quality of life should be measured against a range of key domains so that it fully reflects the range of human

experience. These domains must at least include: emotional well-being, interpersonal relations, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, social inclusion and equal rights. Three complementary indicators of quality should apply to all these domains: subjective indicators, objective indicators and organisational indicators. The development of quality standards at European level is not endorsed and recommended by the EASPD. The EASPD recognised that objective and measurable quality standards are needed but they should be developed, implemented and applied at the National and Regional level.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 7.

8. The European Platform for Rehabilitation

The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) took the initiative for European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS). EQUASS services provide approval and certification of quality. All certification schemes comply with the European requirements for quality in the provision of Social Services of General Interest for individuals with a disability (High Level Group on Disability, 2007), the Social NGOs recommendations for Quality in Social and Health Services (European Platform of Social NGOs. 2008), the Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (EPR, 2010), the European Quality Framework for Social Services (SPC, 2010) and the European Quality Assurance Framework for VET services (European Commission, DG Education and Culture, 2009)

In 2000, the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) consulted stakeholders across Europe to identify the fundamentals of quality in the disability sector. This exercise resulted in detailed requirements for quality in the provision of disability related social services. A technical working group drafted the information into nine Principles for Quality. These Principles for Quality have been approved by the stakeholders of the disability sector and include the perspectives of Europe's most important stakeholders in the field of this sector. The Principles for Quality have been an inspiration for the High Level Group on Disability and the European Platform for Socials NGOs in defining their quality requirements. In 2007 and 2010 the Principles for quality and its criteria have been adapted and revalidated by all key stakeholders in the social sector.

The Principles for Quality are rooted in a 'user-centred' ethos and are designed to provide a framework within which organisations can evaluate their performance and plan their developments. The framework is designed as a process containing the basic elements of a delivery process: input, throughput, output and review. The framework also reflects the cycle of quality improvement: the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle.

While most national quality approaches in the Social sector services take a single-perspective approach, the EQUASS approach is based on the perspectives from the key stakeholders in the disability sector at European Level: Services Users, Service providers, Social Partners, Funders and Policy Makers. These key stakeholders are considered as 'the owners' of the Principles for Quality and the criteria of the certification levels. The EQUASS Principles for Quality are the basis for the EQUASS certification schemes which are complementary to existing quality certification schemes at the national level.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 8.

9. The European Union for Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) (established in 1993) is the European umbrella organisation for supported employment. The members of the EUSE are National Associations of Supported Employment in Europe. EUSE aims to facilitate the development of Supported Employment throughout Europe. The Union works to promote the Supported Employment model through the exchange of information and knowledge on good practice. EUSE also provides a platform for its members to network with other organisations and associations at the European and international level.

The European Union for Supported Employment defined 'Quality' as 'a degree or standard of excellence'. Based on this definition the European Union of Supported Employment developed a framework of guidance to support employment providers. The framework contains a set of minimum standards for best practice or excellence, transferable across the European Community. The Framework aims to provide a benchmark to enable providers to develop and improve the quality of their provision. The standards also provide a framework for providers to self-assess and set targets for the continuous improvement of their provision. The framework (dimensions) defines Supported Employment and the characteristics of the model, and identifies the standards of excellence that are aspired by providers throughout Europe. For each standard a number of specific indicators have been formulated and indication for evaluation is suggested.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 9.

10. Inclusion Europe

Inclusion Europe introduced a philosophy about quality evaluation where the users and their advocates play the central roles. (Inclusion Europe, 2003) This focus on the user is placed in the context that people with intellectual disabilities are users of social services. In the view of Inclusion Europe, individuals with intellectual disabilities are viewed as potentially strong consumers who actively evaluate and influence the quality of the received services – of which they expect these services to meet their needs and expectations. (Inclusion Europe, 2003)

Inclusion Europe predominantly gives two reasons why systems of quality management have to be complemented by instruments based on the perspective of service users:

1. The right to participation for people with intellectual disability has not only been explicitly enshrined in international treaties and conventions, it can also be deduced from their role as consumers. According to this role they have the power to influence the services which are paid to organise their personal support, the right to choose as well as the right to complain.
2. The right to self-determination implies that the role of individuals with intellectual disability is changing from the passive role of dependent recipients of care towards one that encompasses active consumers who are self-determined and who devise the goals they want to pursue and the changes they want to realise in their lives.

Quality evaluation from the client's perspective is about personal experience with the received services. The focus should be on the achievement of outcomes derived from the person's preferences and lifestyle. The concept of quality-of-life, however, is very broad and

consequently very difficult to evaluate in the context of the quality of support services. It makes little sense to tackle the quality of a service generally. Quality assessment from a consumer perspective takes this perspective into account on all levels of the assessment. Persons with a disability identify for themselves, perhaps with support, what outcomes are important and valued in certain areas of life and determine whether these outcomes are achieved or not. All areas that are relevant to the person concerned must be given a place in the quality evaluation. Inclusion Europe stressed that 'standards' make sense if they are used as the link between the service conditions and efforts, and the aspects of quality of life – in terms of outcome – expected by a client.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 10.

11. The Federal Association of non-statutory Welfare (BAGFW)

In Germany, the Federal Association of non-statutory Welfare (BAGFW) has historically been engaged in ensuring care in the event of social and health problems. As providers of social services and associations doing social advocacy, the organisations are characterised by experience and jointly define and develop quality standards. The quality policy of BAGFW is based on the conviction that competition between social service providers should be a competition driven by quality to offer the best possible help and support to people in specific life situations. BAGFW defined quality requirements as a standard specific to welfare work. These standards are designed to be characteristic of quality management within professional social service organisations. BAGFW consider the standards to be a level of quality which should be a guiding principle for activities in Europe.

The policy on quality management of BAGFW is based on a view that is oriented along lines of values and development, and which views quality as the result of dynamic processes. Quality in principle presupposes dialogue, coordination and negotiation, be it among users and service providers or between service providers and funding agencies. It is necessary for staff to find out about the subjective quality requirements of the users. This dialogue is considered to be vital for the quality of the final result and a pre-requisite for satisfying users. Equally, the funding agency, which sets the context as well, needs to be involved in this dialogue.

BAGFW has the opinion that providing quality services happens within a complex set-up of structural, process and result variables and quality development, which must be geared towards the objective. BAGFW follows a management approach that sees quality closely connected with the decisive factors that are personnel and funding. The integration of value orientation, professional expertise and legal requirements, allows for a holistic, traceable and reliable quality of services. Quality management also offers an opportunity to make social services transparent. Quality management could be used as an instrument for monitoring social policy design, to show the need for social policy action on the basis of figures, data, facts and evidence.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 11.

12. European federation of national organisations working with homeless people (FEANTSA).

FEANTSA is the European federation of national organisations working with homeless people. More than 100 members of FEANTSA come from 30 European countries and are non-governmental organisations which provide a wide range of services to homeless people including accommodation, social, health and employment support. FEANTSA is the only major European network that focuses on homelessness.

Homeless services, like most social services, are not static in nature but subject to on-going development in accordance with emerging needs. The concept of quality in homeless services is subject to on-going change as well and will be dependent on the location and context of the homeless service. With the Donabedian conceptual model of quality as a starting point (relating to structural aspects, processes, and outcomes), the following dimensions of quality in homeless services can be derive structural aspects, processes of care and outcome of services. The Donabedian's concept mode; operationalized the three different aspects.

Structural aspects relate to the stable characteristics of the service, including the human, physical, legal and financial resources necessary for delivering services to homeless people. These would also include dimensions such as inter-agency cooperation, strategic planning and internal governance, the composition and skills of the workforce, and the physical state of the accommodation. These aspects are considered fundamental in delivering quality.

The process of care is often considered the primary object of quality assessment. This was operationalised by Donabedian to include dimensions such as working alliances with other organisations, user involvement and participation, the cultural competence of staff to respond to the needs of the service user, the safe environment of the service, the respect of the service user's rights (including privacy, confidentiality).

Outcomes relate to the tangible results of the actions taken by the services and are linked to changes in the service user's living situation and general improved quality of life. Outcomes are also measured in terms of the service's capacity to create effective links with other sectors of society.

The notion of quality by FEANTSA is considered to be a useful way of introducing a new philosophy or new ethics into social services, encouraging and supporting social services to be adaptable to emerging social trends and to new needs of service users.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 12.

13. EFQM Business Excellence

The Fundamental Concepts of Excellence are the underlying principles of the EFQM Excellence Model, which are the essential foundation of achieving Sustainable Excellence for any organisation. They can be used as the basis to describe the attributes of an excellent organisational culture. They also serve as a common language for senior management.

The fundamental concepts which describe care and which are embedded in Excellent organisations are:

1. meet their mission and progress towards their vision through planning and achieving a balanced set of results that meet both the short and long term needs of their stakeholders and, where relevant, exceed them.
2. know that customers are their primary reason for being and therefore must strive to innovate and create value for them by understanding and anticipating their needs and expectations.
3. have leaders who shape the future and make it happen, acting as role models for its values and ethics.
4. are managed through structured and strategically aligned processes using fact-based decision making to create balanced and sustained results.
5. value their people and create a culture of empowerment for the balanced achievement of organisational and personal goals.
6. generate increased value and levels of performance through continual and systematic innovation by harnessing the creativity of their stakeholders.
7. seek, develop and maintain trusting relationships with various partners to ensure mutual success. These partnerships may be formed with customers, society, key suppliers, educational bodies or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
8. embed within their culture an ethical mind-set, clear values and the highest standards of organisation, all of which enable them to strive for economic, social and ecological sustainability.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 13.

14. ISO 9000

The ISO 9000 family of standards relates to quality management systems and is designed to help organizations ensure they meet the needs of customers and other stakeholders. The ISO 9001 standard is generalized and abstract; its parts must be carefully interpreted to make sense within a particular organization. The standards are published by ISO, the International Organization for Standardization, and available through National standards bodies. ISO 9000 deals with the fundamentals of quality management systems, including the eight management principles, which the family of standards is based upon. ISO 9001 deals with the requirements that organizations wishing to meet the standard have to fulfil. Third party certification bodies provide independent confirmation that organizations meet the requirements of ISO 9001. Over a million organizations worldwide are independently certified, making ISO 9001 one of the most widely used management tools in the world today. Despite widespread use, however, the ISO certification process has been criticized as being wasteful and not being useful for all organizations.

ISO does not certify organizations itself. Many countries have formed accreditation bodies to authorize certification bodies, which audit organizations applying for ISO 9001 compliance certification. Although commonly referred to as ISO 9000:2000 certification, the actual standard to which an organization's quality management can be certified is ISO 9001:2008. The various accreditation bodies have mutual agreements with each other to ensure that certificates issued by one of the Accredited Certification Bodies (CB) are accepted worldwide.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 14.

15. Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a result of co-operation among the EU Ministers responsible for Public Administration. It is jointly developed under the aegis of the Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG), a working group of national experts set up by the Directors-General (DG) in order to promote exchanges and cooperation where it concerned innovative ways of modernizing government and public service delivery in EU Member States.

The CAF is an approach to assist public-sector organisations across Europe to use quality management techniques to improve performance. The CAF provides a self-assessment framework, which is conceptually similar to the major Total Quality models; in particular, the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), however, this is specifically designed for public-sector organisations, taking into account their characteristics. The CAF has been designed for use in all parts of the public sector at the national/federal, regional and local level. It may also be used under a wide variety of circumstances, e.g. as part of a systematic programme of reform or as a basis for targeting improvement efforts in specific public-service organisations. In some cases, and especially in very large organisations, self-assessment may also be undertaken in part of an organisation, e.g. in a selected section or department.

The CAF has four main purposes:

1. To introduce public administrations to the principles of TQM and gradually guide them, through the use and understanding of self-assessment, from the current "Plan-Do" sequence of activities to a fully-fledged "Plan-Do-Check-Act (PCDA)" cycle;
2. To facilitate the self-assessment of a public organisation in order to arrive at a diagnosis and improvement actions;
3. To act as a bridge betweenthe various models used in quality management;
4. To facilitate bench-learning between public-sector organisations.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 15.

16. The Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest

The Common Quality Framework (CQF) has been defined within a CEN Workshop environment carried out in the framework of the Prometheus project. As such, the CQF is a result of the project. This project was supported by the European Community Program for Employment and Social Solidarity 2007-2013 (PROGRESS), and managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

The CQF presents a non-compulsory common framework for Quality in Social Services of General Interest (SSGI). The framework takes into account European, national and local quality initiatives in various social service sectors, and is the expression of communalities in quality approaches of the 50 stakeholders in the social sector representing European umbrella and National organisations of services users, service providers, social partners, policy makers and funders working in various social sectors. The framework contributes to a common understanding of the nature of quality in Social Services of General Interest.

The Common Framework for Quality in Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) takes into account European, national and local quality initiatives in various social services sectors, and is the expression of communalities in quality approaches of the participants and the organisations they represent. The framework contributes to a common understanding of the nature of quality in Social Services of General Interest.

The Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (CQF for SSGI) describes a set of domains, preconditions and principles, as well as a set of key criteria that influences the quality of social services. The quality principles are operationalized into qualitative criteria that allows for quality assurance. Compliance with the principles and criteria can be demonstrated in various ways, depending on the particular legislative, cultural and socio-economic context. Therefore, the CQF for SSGI intends to be flexible enough to be applied to all social services that are organised at the regional or local level of all EU member states.

The CQF does not only define quality, it also constitutes as a reference framework with the aim to assess, assure, develop, evaluate and improve quality in SSGI. Moreover, it reinforces transnational aspects of mutual learning, exchange of good practices and a comparison of performance on the provision of social services in the European Member States (bench marking).

The framework describes all fundamental aspects of quality in social services and therefore includes the responsibilities of regulators (National, Regional and Local authorities and other stakeholders) as well as social service providers. The framework builds upon six domains which have been worked out in eight preconditions for quality, as well as nine leading principles. The CQF model describes: the contextual aspects, organisational aspects, the aspects of process delivery and the aspects of outcomes related to quality in social services. The relationship between the domains are characterised as interdependent and expressed in a model. The domains, the preconditions, the principles for quality and the underlying criteria for quality assurance are designed to provide a framework within which service providers, funders and regulators can evaluate their performance and their contribution to the quality of the social services, as well as to plan their developments. The framework also serves as a reference for persons to evaluate their expectations on the delivered services. The

descriptions of the quality principles and core criteria for quality assurance are based on the analysis of the written contributions of the stakeholders on quality in SSGI and the results of the debates at the CEN workshop 51.

Considering the diversity of services and variety of choices made by Member States to deal with quality assurance and development in SSGI, the core criteria for quality assurance are presented as possible answers to specific questions which are transferable to any social service or social service provider when reviewing existing policies. Although providers of some particular social services (for example emergency services, social housing etc.) might face challenges regarding the application of some specific criteria of the common quality framework, the preconditions and the quality principles will for all social services be the crucial factors in addressing quality.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 16.

17. E-Qalin

E-Qalin is a comprehensive model of excellence for old age and nursing homes in Europe. The principle of continuous improvement involving all stakeholders is reflected in the classical quality management cycle "Plan-Do-Check-Act" which is complemented by the importance given to "involve". Significance is places upon the basic characteristics of social services in which users are co-producers of outcomes and the involvement of relevant stakeholders is important. E-Qalin is based upon the fundamental principles of human rights and supports the "European Charter on Rights and Freedom of older persons in Residential Care" (E.D.E., Maastricht 1993).

E-Qalin is a quality management system that combines classical quality management instruments with organisational development and adequate learning and training methods, which have been developed during the Leonardo da Vinci project "E-Qalin" (2004-2007). E-Qalin conceives the introduction of quality management tools as a potential starting point for the empowerment and involvement of staff and other stakeholders to participate in the enhancement of processes and results of services. E-Qalin supports initiatives to map the reality in residential care settings by inviting representatives of all stakeholders to assess and improve structures,processes and results from five different perspectives (residents, staff, management, social environment, and "learning organisation"). E-Qalin seeks to enable relevant stakeholders by means of specific training modules to enhance communication, social competence and systems-thinking within the care organisation for elderly persons.

Detailed information about the approach can be found in annex 17.

Conclusion

All European stakeholders in the social sector emphasised the importance of having Common Guidelines and common Principles for Quality in the provision of social services. All identified European stakeholders recognised that the Guidelines and Principles should be 'value based' and emphases the need for quality criteria indicators for the identified Common Guidelines for Quality. Some European stakeholders have identified criteria for specific principles. The European Platform for Rehabilitation has developed an independent certification program by which social service provider may assess and certify their performance against the EQF, the CQF for SS and the EQAVET framework for VET-providers.

Most of the European stakeholders prefer having non-prescriptive and non-compulsory Quality Guidelines and Principles and open criteria (which could be addressed in various ways) for the provision of social services.

The identified quality Principles, guidelines and criteria can be categorised into the following five dimensions: pre-conditions for quality, the service user, the service provider organization, the staff / professional and the service itself.

All stakeholders recognised the importance of systematic quality improvement and management of quality management. Some approaches see quality improvement and management of quality as an essential element of the quality guidelines in assuring quality in the provision of the services. Other approaches see quality improvement as a condition for delivering quality services and quality management as an element of good governance (business management). Some systems emphases a more universal approach on managing quality (ISO) or managing organisations (EFQM / CAF). While other systems emphases more sector specific approaches in managing quality and meeting quality requirements of stakeholders (E-Qalin / EQUASS). In all approaches it is emphasised that quality improvement and quality management should be carried out systematically.

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